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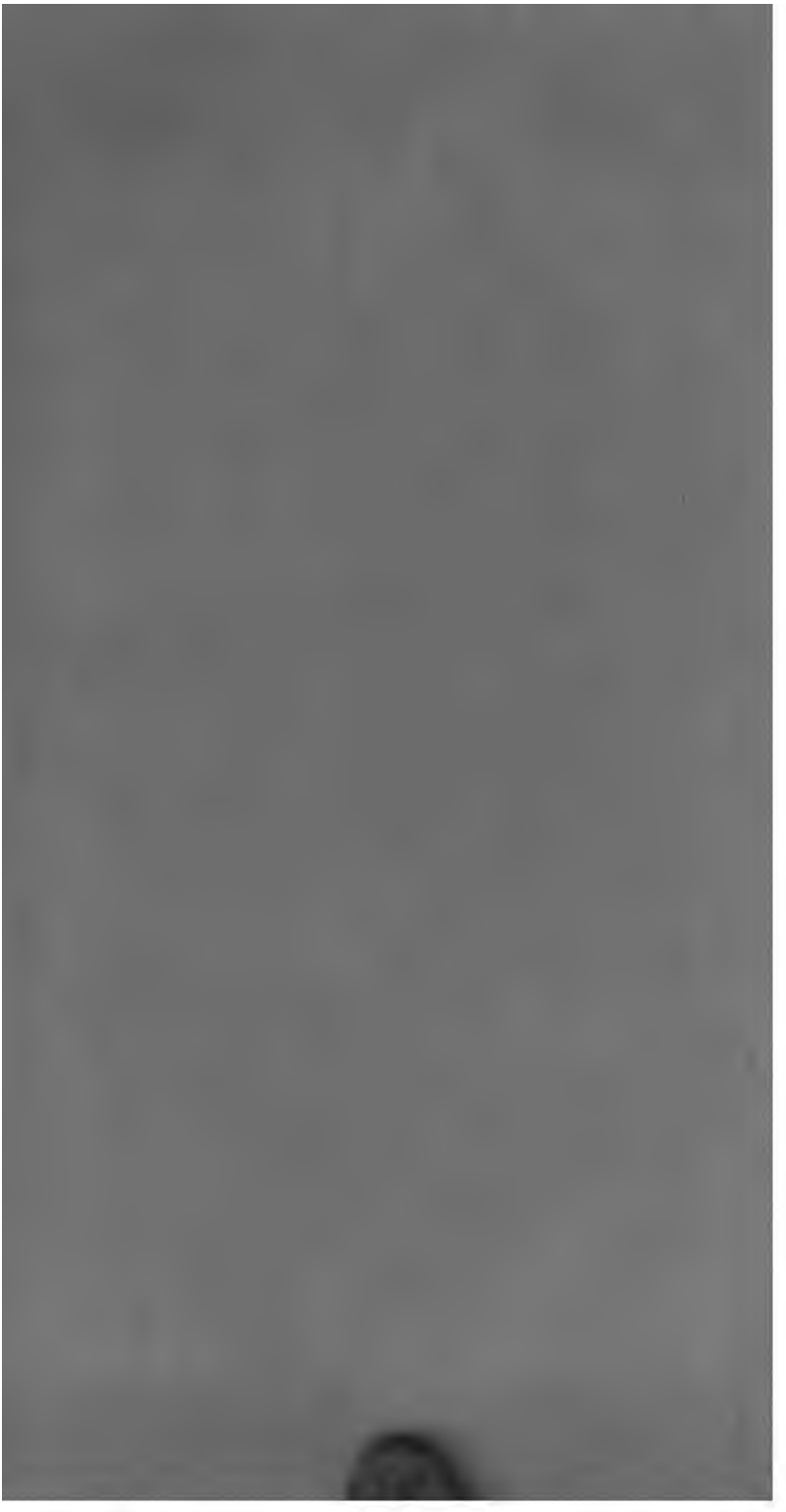

THE

NATIONAL PREACHER:

OR ORIGINAL

MONTHLY SERMONS

FROM

LIVING MINISTERS.

EDITED BY

AUSTIN DICKINSON, A.M.

NEW-YORK.

"It shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary; and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine."—*Ezek.* xlvii. 12.

"Go thou, and read in the roll, which thou hast written from my mouth, the words of the Lord, in the ears of the people;

"It may be they will present their supplication before the Lord, and will return every one from his evil way."—*Jer.* xxxvi. 6, 7.

VOL. I.

FOR THE YEAR COMMENCING JUNE 1826.

NEW-YORK:

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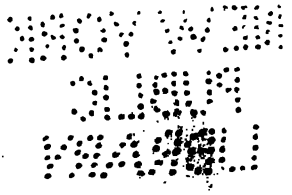

PREFACE.

The Editor was led to undertake this Publication from having travelled extensively in the United States, and seen and heard much of the want of a preached Gospel. It seemed very desirable, that some simple method should be adopted, through which millions of fellow-sinners, going down to death, might be addressed, at once, on the great subject of salvation. The idea occurred that Ministers in the different States doubtless had Discourses, prepared in some of their happiest moments of thought and feeling, which, if concentrated in a Work of this kind, might reflect light on the desolate places, as well as on the churches of our land. It was thought, also, that this method of introducing Ministers of different sections of the church and of the nation to each other and to the Christian public, might be the means of promoting among good men a more general harmony of feeling and effort, and thus widening and strengthening that band of brotherhood which is to encircle the world. It seemed, moreover, that it might be desirable as an item of history, that there should be some National Work, from which men of other nations and languages, and of future ages, might have the opportunity of knowing what was the character of preaching in the United States, in this era of Christian enterprise, and of the Holy Spirit's gracious operation.

The encouragement received, during the first year, has exceeded the most sanguine expectations. So much so, that second and third editions of back Numbers have been called for; and, in all, upwards of one hundred thousand copies of Numbers have been published.

The Editor, however, is aware that the Work is comparatively but little known. Scattered as its Numbers have been

throughout our extended territory, they appear, among a population of twelve millions, but as drops in the ocean. The number of Subscribers does not yet average one to each Post-office in the United States. For a more extended usefulness among our rapidly increasing population, the Work must rely on the co-operation of the intelligent and the blessing of Heaven. The Editor will spare no reasonable effort or expense for rendering it worthy of introduction to every family. Upwards of forty Clergymen, in different parts of the United States and of five Christian denominations, most of whom are known to the public as Authors, are engaged to contribute Sermons for succeeding Volumes.

That the Work, from year to year, may grow in piety and vigour of thought—may continue to find favour with God and man—may find its way to the palaces of princes, as well as to the cottages of the poor—and may be instrumental in advancing all our benevolent institutions, and in impressing divine truth on millions yet unborn—is the ardent prayer of the

NEW-YORK, *May*, 1827. EDITOR.

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THE

NATIONAL PREACHER.

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No. 1. JUNE, 1826. Vol. I.

SERMON I.

By JOHN M. MASON, D. D.

NEW-YORK.

THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL.

Luke vii, 22.—*To the Poor the Gospel is preached.*

The Old Testament closes with a remarkable prediction concerning Messiah and his forerunner. "Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord; and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." Accordingly, at the appointed time, came John the Baptist, "in the spirit and power of Elias," saying, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." In his great work of "preparing the way of the Lord," he challenged sin without respect of persons. The attempt was hazardous; but, feeling the majesty of his character, he was not to be moved by considerations which divert or intimidate the ordinary man. Name, sect, station, were alike to him. Not even the imperial purple, when it harboured a crime, afforded protection from his rebuke. His fidelity in this point cost him his life. For having "reproved Herod, for Herodias his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done," he was thrown into prison, and at length sacrificed to the most implacable of all resentments, the resentment of an abandoned woman.

It was in the interval between his arrest and execution, that he sent to Jesus the message on which my text is grounded. As his office gave him no security against the workings of unbelief in the hour of temptation, it is not strange, if, in a dungeon and in chains, his mind was invaded by an occasional doubt. The question, by two of his disciples, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" has all the air of an inquiry for personal satisfaction; and so his Lord's reply seems to treat it. "Go your way, and tell

John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached." The answer is clear and convincing. It enumerates the very signs by which the church was to know her God, "for whom she had waited;" and they were enough to remove the suspicions, and confirm the soul, of his servant John.

Admitting that Jesus Christ actually wrought the works here ascribed to him, every sober man will conclude with Nicodemus, "We know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." It is not, however, my intention to dwell on the miraculous evidence of Christianity. The article, which I select as exhibiting it in a plain but interesting view, is, THE PREACHING OF GOSPEL TO THE POOR.

In scriptural language, "the poor," who are most exposed to suffering and least able to encounter it, represent all who are destitute of good necessary to their perfection and happiness; especially those who feel their want, and are disconsolate; especially those who are anxiously "waiting for the consolation of Israel." Thus in Ps. xl, 17: "I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinketh upon me." Thus in Is. xli, 17: "When the poor and needy seek water and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst; I, the Lord, will hear them; I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them." Thus also, ch. lxi, 1: "The Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the *meek*;" the same word with that rendered "poor;" and so it is translated by Luke, ch. iv, 18, "to preach the gospel to the *poor*;" which is connected, both in the prophet and evangelist, with "healing the *broken-hearted*." Our Lord, therefore, refers John, as he did the Jews in the synagogue at Nazareth, to this very prediction as fulfilled in himself. So that his own definition of his own religion is, *a system of consolation for the wretched*. This is so far from excluding the *literal poor*, that the success of the gospel with them is the pledge of its success with all others: for they not only form the majority of the human race, but they also bear the chief burden of its calamities. Moreover, as the sources of pleasure and pain are substantially the same in all men; and as affliction, by suspending the influence of their artificial distinctions, reduces them to the level of their common nature; whatever by appealing to the principles of that nature, promotes the happiness of the multitude, must equally promote the happiness of the residue; and whatever consoles the one, must, in like circumstances, console the other also. As we cannot, therefore, maintain the suitableness of the gospel to the literal poor, who are the mass of mankind, without maintaining its prerogative of comforting the afflicted; nor, on the contrary, its prerogative of comforting, separately from its suitableness to the

mass of mankind, I shall consider these two ideas as involving each other.

With this explanation, the first thing which demands your notice, is the FACT ITSELF—GOSPEL PREACHED TO THE POOR.

From the remotest antiquity there have been, in all civilized nations, men who devoted themselves to the increase of knowledge and happiness. Their speculations were subtle, their arguings acute, and many of their maxims respectable. But to whom were their instructions addressed? To casual visiters, to selected friends, to admiring pupils, to privileged orders! In some countries, and on certain occasions, when vanity was to be gratified by the acquisition of fame, their appearances were more public. For example, one read a poem, another a history, and a third a play, before the crowds assembled at the Olympic games. To be crowned there, was, in the proudest period of Greece, the summit of glory and ambition. But what did this, what did the mysteries of pagan worship, or what the lectures of pagan philosophy, avail the *people?* Sunk in ignorance, in poverty, and crime, they lay neglected. Age succeeded to age, and school to school; a thousand sects and systems rose, flourished, and fell; but the degradation of the multitude remained. Not a beam of light found its way into their darkness, nor a drop of consolation into their cup. Indeed a plan for raising them to the dignity of rational enjoyment, and fortifying them against the disasters of life, was not to be expected: for as nothing can exceed the contempt in which they were held by the professors of wisdom; so any human device, however captivating in theory, would have been worthless in fact. The most sagacious heathen could imagine no better means of improving them than the precepts of his philosophy. Now, supposing it to be ever so salutary, its benefits must have been confined to a very few; the notion that the bulk of mankind may become philosophers, being altogether extravagant. They ever have been, and, in the nature of things, ever must be unlearned. Besides, the grovelling superstition and brutal manners of the heathen, presented insuperable obstacles. Had the plan of their cultivation been even suggested, especially if it comprehended the more abject of the species, it would have been universally derided, and would have merited derision, no less than the dreams of modern folly about the perfectibility of man.

Under this incapacity of *instructing* the poor, how would the pagan sage have acquitted himself as their *comforter?* His dogmas, during prosperity and health, might humour his fancy, might flatter his pride, or dupe his understanding; but against the hour of grief or dissolution he had no solace for himself, and could have none for others. I am not to be persuaded, in contradiction to every principle of my animal and rational being, that pain, and misfortune, and death, are no evils, and are beneath a wise man's regard. And

could I work myself up into so absurd a conviction, how would it promote my comfort? Comfort is essentially consistent with nature and truth. By perverting my judgment, by hardening my heart, by chilling my nobler warmth, and stifling my best affections, I may grow stupid; but shall be far enough from consolation. Convert me into a beast, and I shall be without remorse; into a block, and I shall feel no pain. But this was not my request. I asked you for consolation, and you destroy my ability to receive it. I asked you to bear me over death, into the fellowship of immortals, and you begin by transforming me into a monster! Here are no glad tidings: nothing to cheer the gloom of outward or inward poverty. And the pagan teacher could give no better. From him, therefore, the miserable, even of his own country, and class, and kindred, had nothing to hope. But to "lift the needy from the dunghill," and wipe away the tears from the mourner; to lighten the burdens of the heart; to heal its maladies, repair its losses, and enlarge its enjoyments; and that under every form of penury and sorrow, in all nations, and ages, and circumstances; as it is a scheme too vast for the human faculties, so, had it been committed to merely human execution, it could not have proceeded a single step, and would have been remembered only as a frantic revery.

Yet all this hath Christianity undertaken. Her voice is, without distinction, to people of every colour, and clime, and condition: to the continent and the isles; to the man of the city, the man of the field, and the man of the woods; to the Moor, the Hindoo, and the Hottentot; to the sick and desperate; to the beggar, the convict, and the slave. She impairs no faculty, interdicts no affection, infringes no relation; but, taking men as they are, with all their depravity and woes, she proffers them peace and blessedness. Her boasting is not vain. The course of experiment has lasted through more than fifty generations of men. It is passing every hour before our eyes; and, for reasons to be afterwards assigned, has never failed, in a single instance, when it has been fairly tried.

The design is stupendous; and the least success induces us to inquire, by whom it was projected and carried into effect. And what is our astonishment, when we learn, that it was by men of obscure birth, mean education, and feeble resource: by men from a nation hated for their religion, and proverbial for their moroseness; by carpenters, and tax-gatherers, and fishermen of Judea! What shall we say of this phenomenon? A recurrence to the Jewish Scriptures, which had long predicted it, either surrenders the argument, or increases the difficulty. If you admit that they reveal futurity, you recognise the finger of God, and the controversy is at an end. If you call them mere conjectures, you are still to account for their correspondence with the event, and to explain how a great system of benevolence, unheard, unthought of by learned antiquity, came to

be cherished, to be transmitted for centuries from father to son, and at length attempted, among the *Jews!* And you are also contradicted by the fact, that however clearly such a system is marked out in their scriptures, they were so far from adopting it, that they entirely mistook it; rejected it, nationally, with disdain; persecuted unto death those who embarked in it; and have not embraced it to this *day!* Yet in the midst of this bigoted and obstinate people, sprang up the deliverence of the human race. "Salvation is of the Jews." Within half a century after the resurrection of Christ, his disciples had penetrated to the extremes of the Roman empire, and had carried the "day-spring from on high" to innumerable tribes who were "sitting in the region and shadow of death." And so exclusively *Christian* is this plan, so remote from the sphere of common effort, that after it has been proposed and executed, men revert perpetually to their wonted littleness and carelessness. The whole face of Christendom is overspread with proofs, that, in proportion as they depart from the simplicity of the gospel, they forget the multitude as before, and the doctrines of consolation expire. In so far, too, as they adapt to their own notions of propriety, the general idea, which they have borrowed from the gospel, of meliorating the condition of their species, they have produced, and are every day producing, effects the very reverse of their professions. Discontent, and confusion, and crimes, they propagate in abundance. They have smitten the earth with curses, and deluged it with blood; but the instance is yet to be discovered, in which they have "bound up the broken-hearted." The *fact*, therefore, that Christianity is, in the broadest sense of the terms, "glad tidings to the poor," is perfectly original. It stands without rival or comparison. It has no foundation in the principles of human enterprise; and could never have existed without the inspiration of that "Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good and every perfect gift."

II. As the Christian FACT is original, so the REASONS OF ITS EFFICACY ARE PECULIAR. Christianity can afford consolation, because *it is fitted to our nature and character.* I specify particulars:

First. The gospel proceeds upon the principle of *immortality.*

That our bodies shall die is indisputable. But that reluctance of nature, that panting after life, that horror of annihilation of which no man can completely divest himself, connect the death of the body with deep solicitude. While neither these, nor any other merely rational considerations, ascertain the certainty of future being; much less of future bliss. The feeble light which glimmered around this point among the heathen, flowed not from investigation, but tradition. It was to be seen chiefly among the vulgar, who inherited the tales of their fathers; and among the poets, who preferred popular fable to philosophic speculation. Reason would have pursued her discovery; but the pagans knew not how to apply the notion of immor-

tality, even when they had it. It governed not their precepts; it established not their hope. When they attempted to discuss the grounds of it, "they became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened." The best arguments of Socrates are unworthy of a child, who has "learned the holy scriptures." And it is remarkable enough, that the doctrine of immortality is as perfectly detached, and as barren of moral effect, in the hands of modern infidels, as it was in the hands of the ancient pagans. They have been so unable to assign it a convenient place in their system; they have found it to be so much at variance with their habits, and so troublesome in their warfare with the scriptures, that the more resolute of the sect have discarded it altogether. With the soberer part of them it is no better than an opinion; but it never was, and never will be a source of true consolation, in any system or any bosom, but the system of Christianity and the bosom of the Christian. "Life and immortality," about which some have guessed, for which all have sighed, but of which none could trace the relations, or prove the existence, are not merely hinted, they "are brought to light by the gospel." This is the parting point with every other religion; and yet the very point upon which our happiness hangs. That we shall survive the body, and pass from its dissolution to the bar of God, and from the bar of God to endless retribution, are truths of infinite moment, and of pure revelation. They demonstrate the incapacity of temporal things to content the soul. They explain why grandeur, and pleasure, and fame, leave the heart sad. He who pretends to be my comforter without consulting my immortality, overlooks my essential want. The gospel supplies it. Immortality is the basis of her fabric. She resolves the importance of man into its true reason—the *value of his soul.* She sees under every human form, however rugged or abused, a spirit unalterable by external change, unassailable by death, and endued with stupendous faculties of knowledge and action, of enjoyment and suffering; a spirit, at the same time, depraved and guilty; and therefore liable to irreparable ruin. These are Christian views. They elevate us to a height, at which the puny theories of the world stand and gaze. They stamp new interest on all my relations, and all my acts. They hold up before me objects vast as my wishes, terrible as my fears, and permanent as my being. They bind me to eternity.

Secondly. Having thus unfolded the general doctrine of immortality, the gospel advances further, informing us, that although a future life is sure, *future blessedness is by no means a matter of course.* This receives instant confirmation from a review of our character as *sinners.*

None but an atheist, or, which is the same thing, a madman, will deny the existence of moral obligation, and the sanction of moral law. In other words, that it is our duty to obey God, and that he

has annexed penalties to disobedience. As little can it be denied, that we have actually disobeyed him. Guilt has taken up its abode in the conscience, and indicates, by signs not to be misunderstood, both its presence and power. To call this superstition, betrays only that vanity, which thinks to confute a doctrine by giving it an ill name. Depravity and its consequences meet us, at every moment, in a thousand shapes; nor is there an individual breathing who has escaped its taint. Therefore our relations to our Creator as innocent creatures have ceased; and are succeeded by the relation of rebels against his government. In no other light can he contemplate us, because his "judgment is according to truth." A conviction of this begets alarm and wretchedness. And, whatever some may pretend, a guilty conscience is the secret worm, which preys upon the vitals of human peace: the invisible spell, which turns the draught of pleasure into wormwood and gall. To laugh at it as an imaginary evil, is the mark of a fool: for what can be more rational than to tremble at the displeasure of an almighty God. If, then, I ask how I am to be delivered? or whether deliverance is possible? human reason is dumb: or if she open her lips, it is only to tease me with conjectures, which evince that she knows nothing of the matter. Here the Christian verity interferes; showing me, on the one hand, that my alarm is well founded; that my demerit and danger are far beyond even my own suspicions; that God, with whom I have to do, "will by no means clear the guilty; but, on the other hand, revealing the provision of his infinite wisdom and grace, for releasing me from guilt. "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The more I ponder this method of salvation, the more I am convinced that it displays the divine perfection, and exalts the divine government; so that "it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." Now I know where to obtain the first requisite to happiness, pardon of sin. In Christ Jesus, the Lord, is that justifying righteousness, the want of which, though I was ignorant of the cause, kept me miserable till this hour. I cling to it, and am safe. His precious blood "purges my conscience." It "extends peace to me as a river, and the glory of redemption like a flowing stream." My worst fears are dispelled: "the wrath to come" is not for me; I can look with composure at futurity, and feel joy springing up with the thought that I am immortal.

Thirdly. In addition to deliverance from wrath, Christianity provides relief against the *plague of the heart.*

It will not be contested, that disorder reigns among the passions of men. The very attempts to rectify it are a sufficient concession; and their ill success shows their authors to have been *physicians of*

no value. That particular ebullitions of passion have been repressed, and particular habits of vice overcome, without Christian aid, is admitted. But if any one shall conclude, that these are examples of victory over the *principle* of depravity, he will greatly err. For, not to insist that the experience of the world is against him, we have complete evidence, that all reformations, not evangelical, are merely an exchange of lusts; or rather, the elevation of one evil appetite by the depression of another; the *strength* of depravity continuing the same; its *form* only varied. Nor can it be otherwise. Untaught of God, the most comprehensive genius is unable either to trace the original of corruption, or to check its force. It has its fountain where he least and last believes it to be; but where the omniscient eye has searched it out; in the human heart; the heart, filled with "enmity against God"—the heart, "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." 'But, the discovery being made, his measures, you hope, will take surer effect.' Quite the contrary. It now defies his power, as it formerly did his wisdom. How have disciples of the moral school studied and toiled! how have they resolved, and vowed, and fasted, watched, and prayed, travelling through the whole circuit of devout austeries! and setd own at last, "wearied in the greatness of their way!" But no marvel! the "Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots." Neither can impurity purify itself. Here again, light from the footsteps of the Christian truth breaks in upon the darkness; and gospel again flows from her tongue; the gospel of a *new heart*—the gospel of regenerating and sanctifying grace; as the promise, the gift, the work of God. "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you; a new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh; and I will give you an heart of flesh; and I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them." Here all our difficulties are resolved at once. The spirit of life in Christ Jesus, quickens "the dead in trespasses and sins. The Lord, our strength, works in us all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power." That which was impossible with men, is not so with him; for "with him all things are possible; even the subduing our iniquities;" creating us anew, after his own image, "in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness;" turning our polluted souls into his own "habitation through the Spirit;" and making us "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light." Verily *this is gospel;* worthy to go in company with remission of sin. And shall I conquer at last? Shall I, indeed, be delivered from the bondage and the torment of corruption? A new sensation passes through my breast. "I lift up mine eyes

; to the hills from whence cometh my help;" and with the hope of "perfecting holiness in the fear of God," hail my immortality.

Fourthly. Having thus removed our guilt and cleansed our affections, the gospel proceeds to put us in possession of *adequate enjoyment.* An irresistible law of our being impels us to seek happiness. Nor *will* a million of frustrated hopes deter from new experiments; because despair is infinitely more excruciating than the fear of fresh disappointment. But an impulse, always vehement and never successful, multiplies the materials and inlets of pain. This assertion carries with it its own proof; and the principle it assumes is verified by the history of our species. In every place, and at all times, ingenuity has been racked to meet the ravenous desires. Occupation, wealth, dignity, science, amusement, all have been tried; are all tried at this hour; and all in vain. The heart still repines: the unappeased cry is, Give, give. There is a fatal error somewhere; and the gospel detects it. Fallen away from God, we have substituted the creature in his place. This is the grand mistake: the fraud which sin has committed upon our nature. The gospel reveals God as the satisfying good, and brings it within our reach. It proclaims him reconciled in Christ Jesus, as our father, our friend, our portion. It introduces us into his presence with liberty to ask in the Intercessor's name, and asking, to "receive, that our joy may be full." It keeps us under his eye; surrounds us with his arm; feeds us upon *living bread* which he *gives from heaven:* seals us up to an eternal inheritance; and even engages to reclaim our dead bodies from the grave, and fashion them in beauty, which shall vie with heaven! It is enough! My prayers and desires can go no further: I have got to the "fountain of living waters—Return to thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee!"

This gospel of immortality, in righteousness, purity, and bliss, would be inestimable, were it even obscure, and not to be comprehended without painful scrutiny. But I observe again,

Fifthly. That, unlike the systems of men, and contrary to their anticipations, the gospel is as *simple* as it is glorious. Its primary doctrines, though capable of exercising the most disciplined talent, are adapted to the common understanding. Were they dark and abstruse, they might gratify a speculative mind, but would be lost upon the multitude, and be unprofitable to all, as doctrines of consolation. The mass of mankind never can be profound reasoners. To omit other difficulties, they have not leisure. Instruction, to do them good, must be interesting, solemn, repeated, and plain. This is the benign office of the gospel. Her principal topics are few; they are constantly recurring in various connexions; they come home to every man's condition; they have an interpreter in his bosom: they are enforced by motives which honesty can hardly mistake, and conscience will rarely dispute. Unlettered men, who love

their Bible, seldom quarrel about the prominent articles of faith and duty; and as seldom do they appear among the proselytes of that meager refinement which arrogates the title of *Philosophical Christianity.*

From its simplicity, moreover, the gospel derives advantages in consolation. Grief, whether in the learned or illiterate, is always simple. A man, bowed down under calamity, has no relish for investigation. His powers relax; he leans upon his comforter; his support must be without toil, or his spirit faints. Conformably to these reflections, we see, on the one hand, that the unlearned compose the bulk of Christians; the life of whose souls is in the substantial doctrines of the cross—and on the other, that in the time of affliction even the careless lend their ear to the voice of revelation. Precious, at all times, to believers, it is doubly precious in the hour of trial. These things prove, not only that the gospel, when understood, gives a peculiar relief in trouble, but that it is readily apprehended; being most acceptable when we are the least inclined to critical research.

Sixthly. The gospel, so admirable for its simplicity, has also the recommendation of *truth.* The wretch who dreams of transport, feels a new sting in his wretchedness when he opens his eyes, and the delusion is fled. No real misery can be removed, nor any real benefit conferred, by doctrines which want the seal of certainty. And were the gospel of Jesus a human invention; or were it checked by any rational suspicion, that it may turn out to be a fable; it might retain its brilliancy, its sublimity, and even a portion of its interest; but the charm of its consolation would be gone. Nay, it would add gall to bitterness, by fostering a hope which the next hour might laugh to scorn. But we may dismiss our anxiety; for there is no hazard of such an issue. Not only "grace," but "*truth,*" came by Jesus Christ. *The gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth,* were words of the *Amen, the faithful and true Witness;* and those which he has written in his blessed book, are "pure words, as silver tried in the furnace, purified seven times." His promises no man can deny to be *exceeding great;* yet they derive their value to us from assurances, which, by satisfying the hardest conditions of evidence, render doubt not only inexcusable, but even criminal. "By two immutable things, in which it was *impossible for God to lie,* we have a strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." Now, therefore, the promises of the gospel which are "exceeding great," are also "precious." We need not scruple to trust ourselves for this life and the life to come, upon that word which shall stand when *heaven and earth pass away.* Oh, it is this which makes Christianity glad tidings to the depressed and perishing! No fear of disappointment. No hope that shall *make ashamed!* Under the feet of evangelical faith is a covenant

promise, and that promise is everlasting Rock. *I know*, said one, whose testimony is corroborated by millions in both worlds, "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

Lastly. The gospel, as a system of consolation, is perfected by the *authority* and energy which accompany it. The devices of man originate in his fancy, and expire with his breath. Destitute of power, they play around depravity, like shadows round the mountain top, and vanish without leaving an impression. Their effect would be inconsiderable, could he manifest them to be true; because he cannot compel the admission of truth itself into the human mind. Indifference, unreasonableness, prejudice, petulance, oppose to it an almost incredible resistance. We see this in the affairs of every day, and especially in the stronger conflicts of opinion and passion. Now, besides the opposition which moral truth has always to encounter, there is a particular reason why the truth of the gospel, though most salutary, though attested by every thing within us and around us; by life and death; by earth and heaven and hell; will not succeed unless backed by divine energy. It is this: Sin has perverted the understanding of man, and poisoned his heart. It persuaded him first to throw away his blessedness, and then to hate it. The reign of this hatred, which the Scriptures call *enmity against God*, is most absolute in every unrenewed man. It teaches him never to yield a point unfriendly to one corruption, without stipulating for an equivalent in favour of another. Now, as the gospel flatters *none* of his corruptions in *any* shape, it meets with deadly hostility from *all his corruptions* in *every* shape. It is to no purpose that you press upon him the "great salvation;" that you demonstrate his errors and their corrective; his diseases and their cure. Demonstrate you may, but you convert him not. He will occasionally startle and listen; but it is only to relapse into his wonted supineness: and you shall as soon call up the dead from their dust, as awaken him to a sense of his danger, and prevail with him to embrace the salvation of God. 'Where then,' you will demand, 'is the pre-eminence of your gospel?' I answer, with the apostle Paul, that "it is the power of God to salvation." When a sinner is to be converted, that is, when a slave is to be liberated from his chains, and a rebel from execution, that same voice which has spoken in the Scriptures, speaks by them to his heart, and commands an audience. —He finds the word of God to be "quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword." It sets him before the bar of justice; strips him of his self-importance; "sweeps away his refuge of lies;" and shows him that death which is "the wages of sin." It then conducts him, all trembling, to the Divine forgiveness; reveals Christ Jesus in his soul, as his righteousness, his peace, his hope of glory. Amazing transition! But is not the cause equal to the

effect? "Hath not the potter power over the clay?" Shall God draw, and the lame not run? Shall God speak, and the deaf not hear? Shall God breathe, and the slain not live? Shall God "lift up the light of his countenance" upon sinners reconciled in his dear Son, and they not be happy? Glory to his name! These are no fictions. "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen. The record, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God,—not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart," is possessed by thousands who have "turned from the power of Satan unto God," and will certify that the revolution was accomplished by his word. And if it perform such prodigies on corruption and death, what shall it not perform in directing, establishing, and consoling them who have already obtained a "good hope through grace?" He who thunders in the curse, speaks peace in the promise; and none can conceive its influence but they who have witnessed it. For proofs you must not go to the statesman, the traveller, or the historian. You must not go to the gay profession, or the splendid ceremonial. You must go to the chamber of unostentatious piety. You must go to the family anecdote, to the Christian tradition, to the observation of faithful ministers. Of the last there are many who, with literal truth, might address you as follows: "I *have seen* this gospel hush into a calm the tempest raised in the bosom by conscious guilt. I *have seen* it melt down the most obdurate into tenderness and contrition. I *have seen* it cheer up the broken-hearted, and bring the tear of gladness into eyes swollen with grief. I *have seen* it produce and maintain serenity under evils which drive the worldling mad. I *have seen* it reconcile the sufferer to his cross, and send the song of praise from lips quivering with agony. I *have seen* it enable the most affectionate relatives to part in death; not without emotion, but without repining; and with a cordial surrender of all that they held most dear to the disposal of their heavenly Father. I *have seen* the fading eye brighten at the promise of Jesus, "Where I am, there shall my servant be also." I *have seen* the faithful spirit released from its clay, now mildly, now triumphantly, to enter into the joy of its Lord."

Who, among the children of men, that *doubts* this representation, would not *wish* it to be correct? Who, that thinks it only *probable*, will not welcome the doctrine on which it is founded, as *worthy of all acceptation?* And who, that *knows* it to be true, will not set his seal to that doctrine as being, most emphatically, *gospel preached to the poor?*

In applying to practical purposes the account which has now been given of the Christian religion, I remark,

1. That it fixes a criterion of Christian ministrations.

If he, who *spake as never man spake*, has declared his own doctrine to abound with consolation to the miserable, then, certainly, the

instructions of others are evangelical only in proportion as they subserve the same gracious end. A contradiction not unfrequent among some advocates of revelation, is to urge against the infidel its power of comfort, and yet to avoid, in their own discourses, almost every principle from which that power is drawn. Disregarding the mass of mankind, to whom the gospel is peculiarly fitted; and omitting those truths which might revive the grieved spirit, or touch the slumbering conscience, they discuss their moral topics in a manner unintelligible to the illiterate, uninteresting to the mourner, and without alarm to the profane. This is not "preaching Christ." Elegant dissertations upon virtue and vice, upon the evidences of revelation, or any other general subject, may entertain the prosperous and the gay; but they will not *mortify our members which are upon the earth:* they will not unsting calamity, nor feed the heart with an imperishable hope. When I go to the house of God, I do not want amusement. I want *the doctrine which is according to godliness.* I want to hear of the remedy against the harassings of my guilt, and the disorder of my affections. I want to be led from weariness and disappointment, to that *goodness which filleth the hungry soul.* I want to have light upon the mystery of Providence; to be taught how the "judgments of the Lord are right;" how I shall be prepared for duty and for trial—how I may "pass the time of my sojourning here in fear," and close it in peace. Tell me of that Lord Jesus, "who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." Tell me of his "intercession for the transgressors" as their "advocate with the Father." Tell me of his Holy Spirit, whom "they that believe on him receive," to be their preserver, sanctifier, comforter. Tell me of his chastenings; their necessity, and their use. Tell me of his presence, and sympathy, and love. Tell me of the virtues, as growing out of his cross, and nurtured by his grace. Tell me of the glory reflected on his name by the obedience of faith. Tell me of vanquished death, of the purified grave, of a blessed resurrection, of the life everlasting—and my bosom warms. This is gospel; these are glad tidings to me as a sufferer, because glad to me as a sinner. They rectify my mistakes; allay my resentments; rebuke my discontent; support me under the weight of moral and natural evil. These attract the poor; steal upon the thoughtless; awe the irreverent; and throw over the service of the sanctuary a majesty, which some fashionable modes of address never fail to dissipate. Where they are habitually neglected, or lightly referred to, there may be much grandeur, but there is no gospel; and those preachers have infinite reason to tremble, who, though admired by the great, and caressed by the vain, are deserted by the poor, the sorrowful, and such as "walk humbly with their God."

2. We should learn from the gospel, lessons of active benevolence.

ye, from whom mysterious Providence has swept away the acquisitions of long and reputable industry. The voice of the Son of God is, "My son, if thou wilt receive my words," thou shalt have "a treasure in the heavens that faileth not;" and mayst "take joyfully the spoiling of thy goods, knowing that thou hast in heaven a better and an enduring substance." Come, ye poor, who, without property to lose, are grappling with distress and exposed to want. The Son of God, though the heir of all things, "had not where to lay his head;" and his voice to his poor is, "Be content with such things as ye have, for I will never leave thee nor forsake thee; thy bread shall be given thee, and thy water shall be sure." Come, ye reproached, who find "cruel mockings" a most bitter persecution. The voice of the Son of God is, "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye, for the spirit of God and of glory resteth upon you." Come, in fine, ye dejected, whom the fear of death holds in bondage. The voice of the Son of God is, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O death, I will be thy plague! O grave, I will be thy destruction! repentance shall be hid from mine eyes!" Blessed Jesus! thy loving-kindness shall "be my joy in the house of my pilgrimage!" and I will praise thee "while I have any being," for that gospel which thou hast preached to the poor!

THE

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Go....Teach all Nations...Matt. xxviii. 19.

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SERMON II.

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PHILADELPHIA.

THE UTILITY OF PRAYER.

Job xxi. 15.—What profit should we have, if we pray unto him?

The utility of prayer, which, according to this scripture, wicked men dispute, the present discourse humbly attempts to demonstrate. This might be quickly done, by showing that God requires men to pray; for God, being infinitely perfect, cannot prescribe a useless or vain service. Consent, however, to the utility of prayer, so obtained, would be grounded on the presumption of its usefulness, not on the vivid perception of the intrinsic evidences of its utility. The former kind of consent is not the most desirable. The heart is never completely and permanently won to truth, but by the perception of its inherent excellence. When we have convinced men that God has required any thing, they are bound to admit its excellence or utility. But before we can effectually commend it to their joyful concurrence, their complacency and love, we must present to their minds the proofs of its essential excellence. This is what I now propose to do in relation to prayer.

Two things let me premise: First, that I speak only of *true* prayer; not the prayer of formality, nor of enthusiasm, nor of selfish anxiety; but that prayer which, through the mediation of Christ, offers up the heart's desires unto God with repentance, and faith, and true submission—Secondly; that in nothing which I say concerning the inherent tendencies and the influence of prayer, do I intend an exclusion of the Holy Spirit's agency in this exercise, although I do not any where distinctly mention it. The object of the discourse requires no refer-

ence to that agency; it being an examination, not of the nature of the Holy Spirit's operation, but of the product thence resulting. These things premised, I remark, that the utility of prayer is comprehended;

IN ITS DIRECT TENDENCY TO IMPROVE THE HUMAN CHARACTER;

IN ITS COUNTERACTING INFLUENCE ON WHATEVER TENDS TO INJURE THAT CHARACTER;

IN ITS EFFICACIOUS INFLUENCE ON WHATEVER IS FAVOURABLE TO IT; AND

IN ITS PERSUASIVE INFLUENCE ON THE GREAT SOURCE OF BLESSEDNESS HIMSELF.

I. Prayer, more than any other means, is adapted, in its own nature, to improve all the powers and properties of the human soul.

Without a countervailing influence, the soul of man will always acquire the character of the objects, with which it has intercourse. If those objects be great, they will leave the stamp of greatness; if good, the stamp of goodness on the soul:—the stamp of littleness, on the other hand, if the objects be little, and of baseness, if they be base.

Again, the soul is more or less strongly impressed with the image of objects, accordingly as it contemplates them more or less directly and intensely. He who regards a thing through the medium of historical information, will be less affected by it, than he who with his own eye sees it: and he who looks at an object closely and minutely, will have a deeper and more exact impression of it, than he who casts towards it one or two glances.

Experience thoroughly confirms these observations. Look the world over, and find the individual, whose mind and moral character do not correspond to the objects, about which his thoughts and affections have been most employed. Is there any truer proverb, than that "he who walketh with wise men shall be wise, and the companion of fools be destroyed?" To know what a man is, it is necessary but to know what company he keeps, what persons and things he has chosen to be familiar with; and as his familiarity with them has been greater or less, so it is certain, that he bears, more or less perfectly, their image, whether good or evil.

But if these remarks be incontrovertible, so likewise is the utility of prayer. Prayer is an exercise of the soul. It expresses the state of the soul in intercourse with God. With God, did I say? Most certainly so; it is to no other than God, supremely Good and Glorious, that the soul elevates herself in prayer—elevates not only her intellect, but her conscience, her affections, her sympathies—her whole immortal and ethereal self;—not to speculate—but to adore—to commune—to breathe out her love, and desires and longings, into the very bosom and heart of the High and Lofty One. What mode of intercourse more direct, more intimate, more affectionate, or better adapted to acquire the image of the Object?

But let us consider the nature of this high intercourse more particularly. The different parts of prayer require correspondent acts and affections of mind, which comprise the substance of all moral excellence, and which prayer, by frequently calling them forth, tends, beyond every thing else, to invigorate and mature. Prayer is adoration: And when are the divine perfections so likely to expand the soul with the ardours of holy love and delight, as when brought distinctly before her eye in this heavenly employment? The philosopher may be indevout, while he traces these perfections in the frame of nature; and the theologian may coldly speculate and discourse concerning them as exhibited in scripture. But he who fixes a firm and single eye on God in prayer, and dwells on one attribute and another with adoring admiration, will not be long unconscious of that pure flame, in which are blended all the elements of virtue and happiness. —Prayer is confession of sin: And when is sin more apt to melt the heart into the soft relentings of godly contrition, than when carefully recounted to Him against whom it has all been committed, with a spirit awed into reverence and submission by the pure majesty of the Divine Presence? You may speak lightly of sin, when your words are directed to the sinful ear of a creature like yourself; but get you into some solitary place, and set the Lord distinctly and immediately before you; and spread out your offences before His undefiled eye; and under His pure and piercing gaze, lay your heart and life open; —and I see not how you are ever to become repentant, if your sorrows do not then begin to flow forth. Prayer is supplication for mercy, grounded upon the blood of Christ, and the promises, which in him are yea and amen: And if ever the heart hath advantages for becoming all subdued and possessed by the sentiments and feelings, which those wonders of divine love should excite, it is now. Men may speak to one another of these subjects with as little sensibility as they feel

towards common things: but when the soul collects herself, and comes, and, convinced of her guilt, stands trembling and pleading before her great Judge, and tells Him of His professed clemency and graciousness, and how His own Son hath loved her, and how He Himself hath said, and sworn that for his worthy Son's sake He will withhold no blessing from any humble contrite suppliant—what a resistless tendency hath all this to transfuse the soul with confidence, and faith, and full assurance of hope. Prayer, finally, is thanksgiving for favours received: And, sure, if ever gratitude unfeigned and unextinguishable do glow in a mortal's breast, this is the occupation in which the ethereal passion is generated and nourished. You may be reminded that goodness and mercy have followed you all the days of your life, and look around you upon a thousand witnesses of the divine benignity still compassing you about; and your heart still be but little awake to its numberless and everlasting obligations. But not so, if, in a secret interview with your Father in heaven, you yourself tell over to Him but some few of the countless mercies which His hand hath been incessantly bestowing on you, since you first became the object of His providential and gracious care. Thus does it appear, how the various excellencies of holy character are instrumentally produced and promoted by means of this exercise: and it would appear more convincingly, if the time permitted more detail.

Now as it hence results, that a man, who lives a prayerful life, must be a man of transcendent loveliness and worth, we might be fairly required to subject our conclusion to the decisive test of fact and example. And we need not be unwilling to abide the trial. So much was the life of Enoch a life of prayer, so much did he acknowledge the divine presence, so intimately did he converse with his Maker at all times, that the Scripture, giving a brief description of this ancient prophet, declares, that he "walked with God." And so estimable and spiritual did that man's character become, that God, seeing the world was not worthy of him, translated him to heaven, that he should not taste of death. And of Elijah, another singular example of prayer, it is also testified, that the Lord took him up into heaven, not by death, but by a whirlwind. And who knows not that in every age the best and brightest of men have been those, who approached nearest to these illustrious patterns of prayer? At this present time, there are persons, of but inferior parts and accomplishments, who by reason of great prayerfulness transcend, in moral worth, professors of high distinction and splendid gifts. Religionists, however exalted, who are not often with God in prayer, are but little profited

themselves by all their privileges; and but little profitable to others by all their intercourse with them; but contrariwise, being persons of prayer by character, and not in fact, are stumbling-blocks to many; and are the principal causes of this world's incredulity in regard to the efficacy and usefulness of prayer. Great therefore and unparalleled is the direct tendency of prayer to improve the human character. But,

II. Its utility is further manifest, let me next remark, in its counteracting influence on whatever tends to injure that character.

If a thing proves its excellence by its own good tendency on what it directly exerts itself upon, it proves it still more by resisting and overcoming what has a contrary tendency—a tendency to counteract and neutralize the good it aims to accomplish. If a man show me friendship by coming to me with favours and benefits, he shows it further by defeating the designs of certain enemies who intend to rob me of them, as soon as I get them into my possession.

Now there are many things in this world always acting upon the soul with a most debasing and ruinous tendency; and there are no means of overcoming this tendency so efficacious as prayer.

To speak first generally;—there is an influence in worldly things so hostile to the things of the Spirit of God, as sometimes to make these latter things appear like empty shadows, or cunningly devised fables; and the mysteries of the everlasting Gospel are as the superstitious stories which frighten credulous children; and judgment and eternity, heaven and hell, are words, by which crazed or criminal imaginations have expressed their fictions of happiness and horror. It needs no demonstration, that this is an influence utterly subversive of all religion and virtue—adapted to brutalize man's rational nature; and of course, if there be a future state in fact, to involve him in all its untold terrors and torments. Nor need I stay long to show, to what vast extent this baleful influence hath full and domineering ascendency over infatuated mankind; how, though there be few professed skeptics and scorners, there are but a few whose lives do not preach skepticism from beginning to end;—which *practical* skepticism is, to all terrible intents, as bad as any other. Now to overcome this influence, there is no other way than to have the soul brought under a strong impression and bearing from spiritual things. By the very laws of mind, one impression or frame of spirit cannot be permanently displaced but by the introduction of another; and that other never can be generated, but in the presence of its appropriate object. Of necessity, therefore,

must the things of this world sway and debase the human mind, so long as the things of the invisible world do not exert themselves upon it. You must be exposed to the action of unseen things, or remain in unworthy bondage to things which are seen. You must be in such circumstances, that the spiritual glories of God and Christ, and the promises and threatenings of scripture, may pour their peculiar influence on your heart, or else you must remain the slave of mammon, and sordid drudge of the flesh.

Now it is almost unnecessary to remark, that there are no circumstances in which these objects are so nearly approached and so deeply felt, as when the soul solemnly betakes herself to the exercises of prayer. I grant that reading, and hearing, and conversing about divine things, rightly managed, may make profitable impressions, and should by no means be omitted. But there are thousands that read, and hear, and converse, and though some feeling may be generated, it passes over their minds as the little circles, produced by the falling pebble, pass over the surface of the smooth water. If those persons could be persuaded to try the influence of true and fervent prayer, they would find it more availing. Retired from the world, shut up alone with Him who dwelleth in secret, kneeling in His awful presence, fixing the heart for communicating and receiving, speaking to Him and not of Him merely ;—Oh, this brings the unseen world into view, and casts earth into shade and emptiness ; this takes importance and reality off from temporal things, and puts those qualities on eternal and spiritual things ; this places the soul on the verge of eternity, and subjects her to the beams, and breezes, and blessed visions of heaven. Here there is hope of her losing her skepticism and worldliness. In these circumstances this world hath little power ; and it were not surprising, if he who habituates himself to an exercise like this, should soon have his conversation more in heaven than on earth, and his walk more with God than with men.

But it may show yet more forcibly the counteracting power of prayer, to consider its operation in some particular instances of its resistance to the world.

The world then, we all know, tends to make the sons and daughters of men light-minded ; and Levity is no ornament of man's rational being ; nor is it at all suited to our condition in a region full of dangers, and lamentations, and arrows of death ; neither is it compatible with our present or our eternal well-being. But how can levity stand before prayer ? Books and sermons may be unable to contend with it. You may tell me of those. who let no day pass without running through a

chapter, and no sabbath pass without a visit to the house of God, and yet have just as much of this world's vanity in their hearts, and gayety in their looks, and giddiness in their lives, as other people. Further, I have heard professors gravely reason in defence of worldly levities, and reason themselves into a persuasion that they are, to say the least, innocent; and with this persuasion, they have freely gone into them, and led their unthinking offspring along with them in the wildering path. But what if these persons would but seek in prayer to know the way of duty?—what if they would try, whether they could keep the spirit of levity at the throne of grace?—or get leave of Him, who sitteth thereon, to be guided by that spirit?—What if they would go to our Father who is in secret, and ask His blessing upon their intended indulgencies?—or what if, after leaving their gay companions and diversions, they would go and tell Him of the way in which their time and faculties had been employed, to see whether it would be sanctioned by the uplifted light of His countenance! How could levity endure such experiment? How manifestly must a man of true prayer be a man of pure and permanent sobriety; serene and settled, and cheerful without lightness.

Again, the world often fills the bosoms of men with avarice and ambition; under the former of which they make haste to be rich, and under the latter to be great; under either, or both, to be undone—since the love of money is a root of all evil; and since they have no heart to believe the gospel, who receive honour one of another.

Would you then regard that as a useless thing, which has a tendency to eradicate these base passions from the hearts of men? But if men would give themselves to prayer, they would soon cease to be the slaves of these passions. Prayer would quickly dethrone and banish these guilty usurpers of dominion over the immortal minds of men. If men would acknowledge God in all their ways, God himself would be their ruler and guide; and his Holy Spirit would hold the throne of their hearts. If, before they undertake their plans and enterprises, they would submit them, with the calmness and seriousness of pure devotion, for the approbation of Him, on whom they depend for success, how many of them would they relinquish, and with what moderation would they prosecute the rest! Seest thou a man hurrying, and scrambling, and scuffling for the pelf or the praise of this world? Assuredly thou seest a prayerless soul; professor or not, he is a prayerless soul:—one who, if he deals at all with God in prayer, deals with him only so far as to mock and insult him! A praying man knows too much concerning the true riches, and the honour which cometh from God,

to discover such miserable infatuation for the things of an hour. To such a man it matters little, whether he rank with this world's rich or poor, its mighty or its mean. Riches cannot exalt, nor poverty depress him; honours cannot elate him, nor reproaches break his heart. He dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, abiding under the shadow of the Almighty—afraid neither for the terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day.

Once more, the world is full of blinding and infatuating influences, whereby the ears of men are turned away from the truth and are turned unto fables; and some have one doctrine and some another; while the ungodliness of others takes occasion from the variance, to renounce all religious opinions, and to hold every thing pertaining to God and another world uncertain, unsettled, and incapable of ever being placed on any sure basis. Such confusion and doubt hath human depravity engendered in a world to which God's oracles have been given for a guide and directory in the way of truth! Nevertheless, men must be extricated from this labyrinth, as they would be either sanctified or saved. As salvation is inseparable from holiness, so is holiness from the belief of the truth. They have pleasure in unrighteousness who believe not the truth; and against all the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, the everlasting wrath of God is revealed from heaven.

Yet they plead the impossibility of knowing what is truth. The Bible cannot satisfy them; books cannot satisfy them; sermons but multiply their difficulties; and what are they to do? The Eternal Source of truth hath informed them, that they would arrive at certainty, if they would but cease their rebellion against God. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine." It is nothing but the spirit of disobedience that subjects any man to the domination of heresy and delusion. But not to enter on the proof of this, in its universal scope, I affirm, that obedience to God, in the single article of prayer, will prove a sure touchstone of truth, and an impregnable defence to the soul against all the innovations of ruinous opinions and dogmas. The soul in prayer stands too near the Fountain of light and truth to be invaded by the fatal infections of error. Her temper, in this exercise, is incongenial to every thing in error's likeness, and shrinks away from its polluting approach, as modesty recoils from the approach of impudence. Nothing certainly but pure truth is capable of being either relished or expressed by the spirit of genuine prayer. For the spirit of such prayer is the spirit of humility and submissiveness, of heavenly sincerity and holy love; and how with such a spirit can any falsehood

have agreement? On such a spirit light will be poured from all nature, as well as from the providence, and book, and Spirit of God. And hence the common observation, that good men always think alike in prayer. Nor is prayer an unthoughtful business. Much of intellect, as well as feeling, is breathed forth in true devotion; nay from almost every true prayer an epitome of the gospel might be extracted.

Wherefore nothing is more unfounded than the pretence of not being able to come to the knowledge of the truth in the midst of this world's jargon of opinions. There is a sure and an easy way; nor is the existence of that destructive jargon resolvable into any thing else, than the world's forgetfulness of God, and known character for prayerlessness. Let no one question it, that prayer universally tried, would unite the whole world, substantially, in the same mind and judgment, nor leave any man doubtful as to an essential article of faith. Thou, that hearest this announcement, art perhaps an unsettled, unhappy, skeptic; yet desirest not to be so, and hast long tried to convince thyself. Thou hast read; thou hast disputed; and thou hast listened, in hope that thy doubts might be dissipated. I will not question that thou hast done all this; but full well I know, there is one thing thou hast not done. Thou hast not disinterred thy heart out of this world's pollutions and vanities. Thou hast been living in the spirit and in the ways of them who fear not God. It hath not been thy daily delight to enter into thy closet and shut thyself in from all earthly society, and then bow down thy spirit before His presence who seeth in secret. Hadst thou done but this, thou wouldst not have been now a tired wanderer, near eternity's dread brink, with a mind full of doubt, void of fixed hope, aching with ungrateful desire, and anon shivering with apprehension of what may yet befall.

III. Thus have I considered the influence of prayer in counteracting the debasing and soul-destroying tendencies of the world. There are other tendencies favourable to the soul's welfare, and I now wish to show briefly the efficacious influence of prayer upon these.

I begin with the word of God. That word is, in its unresisted applications to the heart, quick and powerful, and as the fire and the hammer which breaketh the rock in pieces. It is perfect, converting the soul; sure, making wise the simple; right, rejoicing the heart; pure, enlightening the eyes—but the time would fail me to repeat a small part of what inspiration hath spoken in its praise. It is nevertheless powerless independently of prayer; for, however great its excellencies,

prayerlessness will either keep them out of view, or turn them into deformities and stumbling-blocks. What are the beauties of the rainbow, or the beams of the sun to the blind man? And who more blind, though voluntarily so, than the prayerless soul? What was the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father to the earthly-minded Jews, when He dwelt among them, full of grace and truth? And what, also, are the wonders of Truth and Wisdom in sacred scripture, to those who are so swayed by an obstinate will, that they cast off fear, and restrain prayer to God. Depravity can see no beauty in holiness; and who are depraved, if not the prayerless? When such persons have read the Bible, till they have it all in their memories, what are they better? Which hath the greater charms in their eye, God's truth or their riches? salvation or the pleasures of sin? I have known of such great readers, who seemed to have learned by their researches, how to cavil and blaspheme, or to play the bigot or the fanatic—such miserable fruit of their labour came of their not mixing prayer with it. Even the renewed find prayer still indispensable to a profitable meditation in scripture. Remaining pollution will blind their eye, if the anointing of the Holy One be not constantly sought; and therefore, though the sacred pages lie open before them, and though they have once been truly enlightened to understand them; they shall not, without unremitted prayer, continue to behold the wonders of God's law.

But the Bible is not the only book that may profit the soul of man. There are profound treatises on every subject of theology and morals, in which treasures of light and learning are contained for the edification of mankind; and here, where man speaks to man, what can hinder the acquisition of benefit by the diligent student? Without meaning to discourage deep study, let me rather ask, what can hinder its resulting fatally, if prayer be restrained? It matters not what the subjects of human thought are,—if intellect alone be conversant with them—if the other faculties of the soul—the conscience, the will, the affections—be not duly exercised—the reign of depravity, instead of being overthrown, is established. And the danger is not imaginary, that in deep and retired studies these other faculties will not be proportionately engaged. Those pastors know this, whose souls are kept in an almost constant stretch of thought, in order to get food, intellectual and spiritual, for their flocks, that else would starve for lack of knowledge. Many think their lives easy, and their labour well rewarded, if they are just kept out of want: but these know little of mental travail; which, in our case, while it is all for the profit of others, greatly endangers our own spiritual state. We have to

think so much for them, that often we have hardly time for prayer; unless we think and pray at once; and yet nothing but prayer can keep our thinking from withering up the life of our personal godliness. Study, in short, will much advance the soul, if it be conducted with a prayerful spirit; but if prayer be slighted, while study accumulates knowledge, it also genders spiritual leanness and impotence; and it is well if it prove not a savour of death unto death at last.

Thus, also, as to the divine ordinance of public preaching—that ordinance by means of which more hath been done for man's spiritual interest than by all other means beside. A man may make his boast of having the ablest minister in the land, and of hearing habitually the most clear and pungent discourses that the human tongue hath ever pronounced; and yet the good of every sermon may be lost to that man, for want of the spirit of prayer in his hearing. For what though the seed be the best, and be sown with the greatest diligence, if it fall upon hard-beaten, or stony, or thorny ground? Now there is no other way of preparing the ground of the heart for the seed of the word, than prayer; and no other influence but that, which prayer draws down upon the soul, can make that seed vegetate and yield fruit. A church-going man, who is not also a man of prayer, has no better reason to expect spiritual benefit from the ordinances of grace, than a husbandman has to expect a harvest, who plants his grain and leaves his field an unfenced common. It is he who enters his closet before he comes to the house of God, and prays in secret before he takes his place in the public assembly, and keeps still praying while the word is sounding powerfully in his ear, and forgets not another retreat to his private chamber after dismission from the courts of the Lord—this is the man, who grows, and thrives, as every one ought, under the ministrations of the word.

The same necessity is there for prayer, to make providential dispensations available to the advancement of man's salvation. For though adversities have a tendency to draw him away from the idolatry of the world, and mercies should lift his affections to their glorious Source, yet all experience testifies, that the former will only sink him into sullen melancholy or fretfulness, and the latter infatuate him with pride and self-sufficiency, unless he keep near to God in the exercise of prayer.

Thus, besides ennobling man's soul, by its own proper and direct influence; and keeping other influences from injuring it, by resisting and overcoming them; prayer is of this further utility, that it makes all favourable influences secure of their end. And now, whether,

taking these things together, there be not good reason to esteem prayer useful,—none I think can doubt, except those who are resolved not to be convinced.

IV. But all the truth on this subject has not yet been told. Prayer has another bearing—another kind of influence, than any which hath yet been considered. It has an influence, not only upon ourselves, and upon all the means and second causes, which tend either to our injury or advantage, but upon Him likewise, to whom it is addressed—upon the mind and conduct of God himself.

So, most obviously, are we taught in holy scripture, especially in those winning words of Christ—"What man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things unto them that ask him." For what are we to gather from this and many parallel texts, if the only influence of prayer is that, which it exerts either directly or indirectly upon ourselves? Is it consistent with any just rule of interpreting language, to give this, or any thing compatible with this, as the meaning of passages which represent God as bestowing benefits *in answer* to earnest supplication for them? How *in answer*, if the supplication hath no influence to procure them? Is it not clear, that any rendering of these passages, which admits not that prayer has in some way a persuasive influence on God, is a wresting,—not an explaining—of scripture,—adapted to make men heartless and cold in an exercise, which should never be otherwise than fervent.

Look at scriptural examples of prayer. When Jacob, after wrestling in this exercise till break of day, still refused to cease without a blessing, how far was he from supposing, that the only influence of prayer was that which it had on his own mind? Did those effectual prayers of Moses, which turned away wrath from rebellious Israel, even after God had threatened to destroy them, exert no influence except on Moses himself? Were those prayers of Elijah, which availed to shut, and afterwards to open heaven without all influence, except on Elijah's own heart? And what shall we say of Abraham's prayer for Sodom? or Daniel's for Jerusalem? or that of the first Christians, which brought an angel down from heaven for St. Peter's enlargement? or, indeed, of any prayer in behalf of others, if the influence of prayer is confined to those who offer it?

And why should it be thought inconsistent with the infinite perfection of God, that He should be influenced by prayer? It is surely agreeable to God's perfection to love righteousness and hate iniquity; and give due expression of that love and hatred by distributing equal rewards and punishments. As well deny the being of God, as make Him indifferent to holiness and sin. But true prayer is holiness, and prayerlessness is sin. In him then who prays, God discerns something *excellent*; something which, consistently with his perfection, he may approve and reward. In him who does not pray, God discerns something evil and hateful; and which therefore must draw forth His abhorrence and indignation. Just as a prodigal son, who asks forgiveness of his father, presents, in his penitent and submissive spirit, a reason why his father should receive him to his arms;—reason it may be, that prevails; while another unreformed prodigal, who implores no forgiveness, presents no such reason, and receives no such favour.

But does not this doctrine make God changeable? Not more so, I first reply, than God's being influenced by the obstinacy of sinners, suddenly and without remedy to destroy them; and by the holiness of his people, to smile upon them with complacency and loving kindness. But wherein, let me ask, consists the unchangeableness of God? Not in His being always entirely destitute of moral feeling; but in his feeling always alike towards the same objects in the same circumstances. God doubtless has perfectly pure and proper feeling toward all things. But all things being eternally present in His view, He is eternally and always in the same degree and manner affected by them. —The prayer that forms a reason for his showing favour at this moment, has always been before His infinite mind; and before it with all its present persuasive influence.

Nor is there any conflict between our doctrine of prayer and that of the divine purposes.—The purposes of God embrace all events, and embrace them in that very order in which they occur in time. If, in the order of actual occurrence, prayer always precedes the bestowal of blessings, it precedes it agreeably to the order of the divine purposes, if, in the purpose of God, prayer eternally stands present as the immediate condition of his favour, it were inconsistent, if things were not so, in event.

It does not appear, therefore, that we speak otherwise than soberly and truly, when we say, that prayer hath power with God. There is nothing in the word of God, nothing in His nature, nothing in His purposes, to discourage the hope of prevailing with Him by prayer.

Far, infinitely far different is the fact. Hath the hungry child encouragement to hope he shall not ask his parent, in vain, for wholesome food? The most affectionate parent would sooner give such a child a stone for bread, or a scorpion for a fish, than the Father of mercies refuse his Holy Spirit to them that ask him. There is not in the universe a being who, compared with God, hath any susceptibility to the influence of prayer. What emanations of love hath it drawn from his heart! What blessings of goodness from His hand! His mightiest acts have been achieved in answer to prayer. "What terrible judgments have been averted; what mighty armies conquered; nay more, the very course of nature changed—the sun himself arrested—by the power of prayer!"—Who can assign the limits of that power? Who can tell what influence prayer hath had on the government of God in this world? But since all the parts of God's empire are united, its influence has travelled beyond earth's boundary, and is now exerting itself, and will exert itself for ever, on the far distant tracts of creation.

While I muse on this, Oh how refreshing and invigorating is the recollection, that at this present period, the smoke of the incense of prayer is rising up to heaven day and night from God's universal Church in the four quarters of the globe! Assuredly the time draws nigh of the restitution of all things. What wonders shall the arm of God presently achieve in fulfilment of the desires of his saints. Away fly all obstructions to the universal spread of Christian truth. Away pass the infidels and scorners of the day to their own proper places, and the Gospel of the kingdom becomes the glory of all nations, and earth resounds with "Alleluia, Salvation!" Transporting scene! and yet is it not possible, that some man may hear all this, and, without gainsaying it, remain unapprised of his private concern in the blest contemplation? Let me put thee in mind, then, my brother, that the end of hearing is practice; and that thou wilt be but a despiser of divine counsel, if thy life henceforth be not a life of true prayer. It depends upon thy conduct concerning prayer, how it is to fare with thy soul for ever. It depends upon this, whether thou find in God a friend or an enemy; and of course, whether all things shall work together for thy good or thy ruin. It may not, indeed, depend upon thy praying, whether the ordinary fruits of the divine bounty shall be bestowed or not. God's sunshine and rain are given to the praying and the prayerless; and even blasphemers and atheists riot on His exhaustless beneficence. But prayer makes this difference—that while temporal blessings become as wings, with which a praying man soars to his eternal rest; they become as millstones about the necks of the prayer-

less, with which they will be sunk down in the deep of eternal despair! "I will curse your blessings," saith He who gave them—"yea, I have cursed them already, because ye lay it not to heart to give God the glory." Whether thou prayest or not, a smooth full tide of prosperity may float thee along for a season; but a storm is gathering; and soon the current will turn against thee; and if thou art not a man of prayer, the proud waters shall overwhelm thee, and thy prosperity be thy destruction.

Nor can I suppress the apprehension, that thine own soul will not be the only victim of thy negligence in this prime regard. Thou standest not separate and aloof from all the rest of the sons of men; but sustainest towards them relations through which, of necessity, thou exertest some influence, hurtful or happy, on their eternal condition. Art thou one in authority? Thine inferiors regarding thee perhaps, not only as higher, but as more knowing than themselves, learn from thy prayerlessness, that to cast off fear and restrain prayer to God is no crime, no disgrace, and of no ill consequence—Under which delusion thou art leading them on to the perdition of ungodly men. Art thou a parent? Then thine doubtless is one of the families that call not on the name of the Lord; and from all the exalting influences of prayer, thine offspring, by thy fault, are withheld. And will they not, by the same means, be also withheld from grace and the inheritance of life? Art thou a member of the church? Thy remissness in prayer exerts a secret influence to make the courts of Zion desolate, and her ways to mourn; and to take out of their places or obscure the brightness of her golden candlesticks. Art thou a minister of God? Thousands may go away to wail for ever in the prisons of darkness, because thou givest not thyself to the exercise of prayer. By that one neglect, thy thoughts are sensualized—thy discourses robbed of unction, thy walk before the saints made a snare and scandal, and all thy ministrations sadly marred and misdirected, if not utterly perverted. The prayerless man perisheth not alone in his iniquity.

A word, at parting, to the saints and faithful in Christ. Great, beloved brethren, and manifold are your privileges; but what I now would humbly call upon you to bear in constant remembrance, is the power which you, all impotent and helpless as you are in yourselves, can exert through prayer. The feeblest among you can chase a thousand—can put ten thousand to flight—can overcome the world—can elevate himself to higher honour than earth can give or appreciate. There is a kind of omnipotence in prayer; as having influence on

Him who is Almighty. But why do I put you in mind of this? Not because I would have you inflate yourselves with pride; but because I remember that the spirit of prayer is altogether benevolent. Its power is unto the destruction of nothing but sin and its fruits. Its power hath the same scope and aim with that Glorious Being on whom it depends. Pure prayer's first accents are, "hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." Faithful brethren, men of prayer, men who have power with God, forget not, I beseech you, what, by means of prayer, you are capable of accomplishing. The world's conversion hath not yet been achieved. Means, with that great end in purpose, have been long in operation, and have recently been much increased. What those means are, you know; and their powerlessness, independently of God's blessing, you also know. I remind you again of your privilege, as endued with the spirit of grace and supplication. For Zion's sake, then, hold not your peace, for Jerusalem's sake rest not, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. There is neither dulness in the ear nor weariness in the arm of God. Both almighty strength and boundless mercy are awake and alert, to make full and swift return to any righteous man's effectual fervent supplication. And the divine glory is still pledged to make the dominion of truth and grace universal and complete: Of the prophecies promising that triumph, not a jot or tittle can fail to be fulfilled; unless God can cease to be God, or the scriptures cease to be his word. And the souls of men have not become less excellent than when Christ counted not his blood too precious to be given for their ransom: Nor are they less liable to be lost, or liable to less than an everlasting perdition. And shall the knees of the saints be soon wearied, and the breath of their prayers be stifled? Oh, let them lift up their hands, and pour forth their cries, till they cease to have their dwelling in the land of prayer.

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SERMON III.

A Sacramental Discourse

By Rev. AUSTIN DICKINSON,

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GAIN FROM THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST.

Luke xxiv. 26.—*Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?*

This question occurs in our Saviour's interesting conversation with the two disciples going to Emmaus. It was on the third day after His crucifixtion, that He, in a mysterious manner, drew near and conversed with them, as they walked and were expressing their astonishment at the events, which had just "come to pass." We think it strange, that the intimate companions of the Lord Jesus should have been so ignorant of the real design of His mission to our world. We think it strange, that they should have been so overwhelmed with surprise and consternation, when He was condemned, crucified, and buried; and that they should have been so astonished at His resurrection; when these events had been distinctly foretold by the prophets, and by the Saviour himself. We think it strange, that the Jews, as a nation, should have continued in obstinate unbelief of His divine Messiahship—especially after His resurrection, which established the faith of His disciples, and which ought to have convinced the world. We wonder at their stupidity.

Is there not, however, something of the same kind of ignorance and unbelief among ourselves; though we have always had in our hands, the writings of the prophets, and the plain corresponding history of their fulfillment? Yes, even the good man, the humble believer of the New Testament, sometimes thinks it almost unaccountable, and incredible, that "the Lord of life and glory, the Creator of all things," should move from His throne; should come down to our guilty world; should assume our nature; should, in that nature, submit to a life of poverty and toil; consent to be arraigned at a human tribunal; to be condemned by lying testimony; and finally to endure an ignominious death! The heart of the Christian, at some moments, perhaps revolts with horror at the narration; and is almost unwilling to believe it. Whilst there are others, who actually laugh at the Scriptural account,—or at least attempt to explain away its meaning,—as utterly unworthy of the majesty of God, and unnecessary for the safety of man, and therefore not to be believed. But to all these the Omniscient Saviour replies, "*O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken; ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?*"

Our present object will be to answer this question, not merely by a reference to the ancient prophecies, but by showing, *that there was infinite propriety and wisdom in the humiliation and sufferings of Christ.* In order to show this, we must inquire, what has been gained by His sufferings? The question before us then is,

WHAT HAS BEEN GAINED TO THE UNIVERSE BY THE SUFFERINGS OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST?

In answering this question we shall think it proper to repeat much of what "holy men, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," have told us on the subject. And,

I. IN CONSEQUENCE OF THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST, AN INNUMERABLE MULTITUDE OF OUR RACE WILL BE RAISED FROM A STATE OF SINFUL DEGRADATION AND MISERY, AND EXALTED TO THE SOCIETY OF ANGELS AND OF GOD.

Says the beloved John, rapt in prophetic vision, "I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kin-

dreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands." And what are the employments of this great multitude? and who are their associates? The same John tells us, they were employed in praising God.—"They cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb." And concerning their associates, he tells us, "all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders, and the four living creatures, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God." And what is the history of these beings, collected out of all nations?—from what situation did they come?—how were they qualified to associate with angels in the worship of heaven? The answer of the Spirit is, "These are they, which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in his temple; and He, that sitteth upon the throne, shall dwell among them."

It appears, then, that this countless multitude were once in a world of trouble and pollution; but have been washed in a Redeemer's blood; and *therefore* are qualified to serve God in His temple above; and to associate with cherubim and seraphim. It appears also from another passage of scripture, that "without shedding of blood there is no remission." All this elevation, then, of the innumerable multitude who ascend from earth to heaven, is in consequence of the "shedding of blood"—in consequence of the sufferings of Christ.

And brethren, dwell for one moment on the change of character and situation here wrought through Christ. Once those redeemed millions were sinners of every description—slaves of every unhallowed lust!—some of them "thieves, drunkards, swearers, liars, fornicators, adulterers, murderers;"—all of them "haters of God!"—But now they are "washed—purified—justified—in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." Once their understandings were all darkened—their affections groveling;—willing slaves of Satan—they sought the company of wicked men and devils! Now their minds are enlightened from the Sun of Righteousness;—refined by the purity of the heavens—they mingle with bright angels! Once they were far from God—far from Christ. Now they are "brought nigh by the blood of Christ"—"see God face to face"—"see as they are seen"—"know as they are known:" Now they shine forth "in the likeness of Christ"—put on the robes of His righteousness—"walk with Him in white"—"converse with Him, as a man with his friend."

All this change of character and situation, let me repeat, is in consequence of "the sufferings of Christ." These beings have been redeemed from prisons of darkness and pollution, and elevated to "mansions of glory,"—"not with corruptible things, such as silver and gold. but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot." Ought not Christ, then, to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory? But, in addition to such elevation and improvement of character,

II. IN CONSEQUENCE OF THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST, ALL WHO FINALLY BELIEVE AND TRUST IN HIM, AS THE SON OF GOD, WILL BE *confirmed* IN A STATE OF PERFECT HOLINESS AND INCREASING HAPPINESS FOR EVER.

The nature of the first Covenant, which God proposed to man, was, "Do this and thou shalt live."—Yield perfect obedience to the Law of God, and ye shall be happy in the favor of God—But "the soul that sinneth, it shall die." "Cursed is every one, that continueth not in all things written in the book of the Law to do them." So that under that Covenant, man must have depended for safety and happiness on his continued obedience to the Law of God, *without any assurance that God would uphold him by his power.* Now even *that* was a good Covenant, and perfectly *reasonable*, and such as man is utterly without excuse for having broken; because the *Law* was reasonable—"The Law was holy, just and good." But still, (thanks to boundless mercy and forbearance,) instead of blasting the rebels at once to hell, Christ, by His voluntary sufferings, has become "the Mediator of a *better* Covenant, which was established upon *better* promises." The substance of this New Covenant, (formed by the "Three that bear record in heaven," was, That if Christ would descend from heaven to earth, and, in human nature, make atonement for sinners, by laying down His own life, the Holy Spirit should be given to sanctify all that should believe, and to uphold them for ever in a state of purity and glory. So that the endless security of all true Christians, on earth and in heaven, now depends, not on any confidence in their own strength, or greater attainments in holiness, than those of Adam, but on the promise and power of Almighty God, granted *through the blood of the everlasting Covenant.*

Christ never would have left his throne for a cross, without a "sure word of promise" from the Eternal Father, that He should "see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied." He never would have redeemed

sinners, with His own blood, without a sure warrant from the court of Heaven, that *of all that the Father had given Him, he should lose none;* but that *they should be kept by the power of God, through faith unto eternal salvation.* With "more than twelve legions of angels" at His command, He never would have surrendered Himself to be condemned by mortals, and to be "crucified by wicked hands," had He not known distinctly the everlasting benefits to be accomplished by His death. He never would have died upon uncertainties. He never would have purchased pardon and restoration for countless millions of rebels against His own government, if, after they were restored, they must still be left liable every moment to fall off again from His kingdom; and become his enemies. No;—long before He entered on this errand of reconciliation, it was stipulated in heaven, that all who should be reclaimed by His mediation, should maintain for ever their allegiance to His throne. It was "for the joy thus set before Him, that He endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne."

In exact accordance with these sentiments, the Saviour, when He appeared on our world, said of Himself, "I am the living bread, which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live *for ever.* And the bread, that I will give, is my flesh; which I will give for the life of the world. Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath *eternal* life. I give unto them *eternal* life; neither shall any pluck them out of my hands."

In a similar strain of assurance the apostle Paul says, "By one offering He hath perfected *for ever* them that are sanctified. The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is *eternal* life through Jesus Christ our Lord. The apostle reasons strongly and triumphantly, when he says, "If when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by His life. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout —with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we, who are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we be *ever* with the Lord."

But what mortal or immortal power can speak the privilege of believers, in being thus *confirmed for ever* in a state of perfect holiness and union to the Saviour? Oh! could the thought once enter their minds, that possibly, after millions and millions of ages, they might again become "THE ENEMIES OF GOD!"—it would send a thrill

of horror through all their ranks!—it would silence for ever their songs of victory!—it would throw darkness impenetrable over all that Eternity, which is before them! it would eclipse all the splendors of the Sun of Righteousness! But fear not, ye redeemed. There is no such possibility. The promise and oath of Jehovah are pledged for your security. The Covenant of redemption, by which ye were given to Christ, before the foundation of the world, as well as the Covenant of Grace, by the acceptance of which ye have bound yourselves to His throne, is an "*Everlasting Covenant.*"

And now, brethren, let it be remembered, that this *everlasting* elevation of human character—this eternal *confirmation* of believers in glory and happiness, is all in consequence of *the shedding of blood*—in consequence of the *sufferings of Christ.* Ought not Christ then to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory? But the benefits of Christ's death are not confined to men. Which leads me to observe,

III. IN THE PROPITIATORY SACRIFICE OF CHRIST, *the Divine Character,* IN ITS VARIOUS ATTRIBUTES, IS GLORIOUSLY DISPLAYED.

The *wisdom* of God is particularly manifested in this transaction. When the immutable Law of God was broken, and countless millions were involved in its curse, no mind of man—no mind of angel—could have contrived, how any of the transgressors might escape punishment, and yet the justice and truth of God be maintained. The declaration had gone forth, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." But Infinite Wisdom saw that it was in the power of the Son of God, in a short period of humiliation and suffering, to make such an atonement, as would, in the view of an intelligent Universe, be considered a sufficient substitute for the eternal punishment of the transgressors. Infinite Wisdom adopted this substitute. The Sacrifice has voluntarily been made. And the everlasting benefits of it are now freely enjoyed by all who are pleased to accept of it in faith; by all who will now *look unto Him and be saved.*

In making this atonement, inconceivably great as Christ's sufferings were, He did not, however, endure those *remorseful* pangs—those *eternal agonies of despair*, which He foresaw must come upon the rebellious, if left without redemption *to increase for ever in guilt.* No one would venture to say this; for in *such* a substitution there would have been *no gain*,—consequently *no wisdom.* Indeed it would be awfully

derogating from His infinite wisdom and merit, to suppose that He could in no way make atonement for the sins of mortals without such endurance. It was *infinite dignity*, united with human nature suffering on the cross, which gave such inconceivable value to His sacrifice, and which, with His obedience, "magnified the Law and made it honorable." It was thus, that "by one offering, He finished" that stupendous plan, through which "God can now be just, and yet justify the ungodly," who repent and believe in Jesus. Here is a work of divine wisdom, which *angels have desired to look into;* but which saints and angels will contemplate with increasing wonder and joy for ever.

The *benevolence* of God is likewise conspicuously manifested in the sufferings of Christ. It is true, that in the other works of God there are striking indications of divine benevolence. In the glorious canopy of the heavens—in the splendid and orderly arrangement of the sun, moon, and unnumbered stars—and in the rich and varied garniture, spread over the face of the earth—we see every where evidences of good design—evidences that God delights in the happiness of His creatures. But still, it is to be considered, that all this beautiful and glorious structure of the heavens and earth was fitted up without any *expense* on the part of Deity—without any *sacrifice* on the part of God. God was infinitely rich and powerful. He had only to *speak, and it was done.* He had only to *command*, and the pillars of heaven, as well as the foundations of earth, "stood fast." He had only to put forth an effort of *His will*, and earth and skies were clothed in grandeur and beauty. So that in doing all this there was no expense, or sacrifice, on the part of God, to demonstrate His benevolence.

But O, when we come to the stupendous work of man's redemption—when we come to behold the Son of God expiring in agony on the cross,—here we find a perfect demonstration of Divine benevolence. Here we find the Great God our Creator actually making a sacrifice of what was most dear to Him, for the benefit of His creatures. Here we find the Great Father of mercies, "that He might show the exceeding riches of His Grace, in His kindness toward us," actually surrendering His own Son to death, that we might live! God "SPARED NOT HIS OWN SON, BUT DELIVERED HIM UP FOR US ALL!" Here is benevolence indeed! And what renders the benevolence of this unspeakable gift still more conspicuous is, that it was a voluntary sacrifice of God's own Son for the benefit of His *enemies!*—for the benefit of those who were impious *rebels* against His holy Government, and *deserving* nothing better than "*banishment from His presence.*" Here is a ma-

nifestation of Divine benevolence infinitely above all human experience or conception. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends; but God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet enemies, Christ died for us."

The *justice* of God is likewise conspicuously manifested in the sufferings of Christ. Had there been no Mediator between God and rebel man—had the punishment of sin fallen directly upon the head of the transgressors—it would have been only an act of common justice—only what might have been expected, as a matter of course, from the character of God's Law. It could not have been considered by superior beings as any very extraordinary exhibition of divine justice, had this little world with all its guilty inhabitants been consigned to perdition. Among the multitude of other worlds, that still maintained their allegiance to the Most High, this lost province might, in the course of ages, have been forgotten. In the revolution of eternal ages, even angels might have forgotten, that their God was "a God of perfect justice;" and thus other angels might have been lifted up with pride; and the inhabitants of other worlds might have been tempted to rebel against their rightful Sovereign. And thus, in the course of ages, one spirit of disaffection and revolt might have spread through all the kingdoms and provinces of Jehovah's empire.

But when, (as the case now stands)—when, instead of the punishment's falling directly upon the transgressors, its equivalent, in significancy and importance, is sustained by One who is known in all worlds—when, after our dreadful revolt, the Angel of the Covenant is seen bending from His throne, and hastening His downward way, and interposing His own person between the avenging stroke of Divine Law and crimes of our revolted world;—and when there is no holding back of that stroke—but all its weight—all its vengeance comes upon Him, as our Substitute—when "the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all"—Oh! here is an exhibition of Divine justice, which can never be forgotten! Here is an exhibition, which must strike a solemn awe of God's justice throughout all worlds, and be remembered for ever!

Thus in the sufferings of Christ the character of God is gloriously displayed. His *wisdom*, His *benevolence*, His *justice*, are all conspicuously, and at the same time harmoniously manifested. Here "mercy and truth have met together,—righteousness and peace have kissed each other." Ought not Christ, then, to have suffered these things? Yes, verily "it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." This leads me to observe,

IV. IN CONSEQUENCE OF THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST, WE HAVE REASON TO BELIEVE, THAT ALL HOLY BEINGS, IN OTHER WORLDS, ARE INSPIRED WITH ENTIRE CONFIDENCE IN THE STABILITY AND EXCELLENCY OF GOD'S GOVERNMENT; AND WILL THUS BE KEPT IN THEIR ALLEGIANCE TO HIS THRONE.

Previous to the sufferings of Christ, there was no such experimental proof, as we now have, but that God might change his purpose, and relax the severity of His judgments, should increasing multitudes rebel against Him. It is true that rebel angels had been thrown from heaven "into chains of darkness." But this was no demonstration, that other, and mightier, and more beloved angels, should they rebel, would be punished with like severity. But when He, who is higher and mightier than all angels, and infinitely more beloved than all created intelligences—when HE experienced the wrath of the Almighty Father, on placing himself in the room of sinners—then a demonstration was given, that the demands of Eternal Justice would never be relaxed on account of the might, or the multitude, or the endeared relation of any who might be found in rebellion. When even HE, standing in the room of sinners, must *of necessity* suffer—when His earnest and repeated prayer, "O my Father, *if it be possible*, let this cup pass from me"—could avail nought to mitigate "the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God" against sin—when that dreadful prophecy, "MESSIAH shall be cut off, but not for himself," is literally executed—here is demonstration, surely, that even Gabriel, or all the glorious company of angels, should they rebel, would incur the unmitigated severities of Jehovah's vengeance. So that the mightiest created beings will henceforth stand in holy awe of the Divine Majesty, and thus be held in their allegiance to His throne.

But it is not merely by a reverential view of God's justice, that holy beings are now bound to His throne. For, as has been seen, in the sufferings of Christ they have a demonstration, too, of the *benevolence* of God, such as was never before given. They perceive that "God is Love"—*Infinite* Love—that He delights in the happiness of His creatures—is ready to make a stupendous sacrifice to promote their happiness. They are thus convinced, that His government is infinitely good, holy, and wise;—that therefore it is for their own interest and glory,—as well as for the glory of God,—to remain obedient and faithful subjects. Thus it is, that angels and all holy beings are inspired with full confidence in the Divine government, and are bound to the eternal throne by cords of love, as well as of fear. And this train of thought

is in perfect accordance with the Scriptures of God, "Who created all things by Jesus Christ, *to the intent*, that now unto the *Principalities and Powers in heavenly places* might be known by the Church," (that is, *by means of the redeemed Church*,) "the manifold wisdom of God."

And now, in review, if a multitude which no man can number, are thus redeemed from sin and misery, and raised to heaven, and confirmed for ever in glory and blessedness; if the character of God is thus illustriously displayed in view of the Universe; and if Jehovah's empire is thus established for ever, in the love, fear, and confidence of all holy intelligences;—*Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?* If all this is gained by His short period of humiliation and suffering, was there not *infinite wisdom and propriety in the great Sacrifice?*

Estimate the value of *one* soul rescued from eternal guilt and agony, and destined to grow for ever in the knowledge and likeness of God; estimate the value of *unnumbered millions* of such souls; estimate the amount of *joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth;* estimate the bliss of *all angelic minds*, when they see *all the ransomed of the Lord return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads;* estimate the amount of *their eternal joy* and the *stability of their confidence*, when they behold the *glory of God, as it shines from the Cross of Christ;* estimate the amount of bliss for ever springing in the *Eternal Mind*, from the reflection, that *His throne is thus established, unchangeably, in the love, and fear, and firm confidence of all holy intelligences;*—and tell me, poor sinner, would you rather that this great sacrifice had not taken place?—would you rather that the Son of God had sat for ever on His throne, than thus descend, to rise with this infinitely greater manifestation of Glory?—this immeasurably wider diffusion of blessedness? Estimate, at one view, the full amount of what we already know has been gained by the sufferings of Christ, and tell me,—can you help receiving, with liveliest faith, the Divine testimony, "God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory?"

Other objects, without doubt, have been gained by the sufferings of Christ, of which God hath not yet told us. "We here see but in part, and we know but in part." But we see enough to make us exclaim, "Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty, just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints." And if we have one sentiment worthy of our relation to God, we see enough to make us ardent in our

aspirings, hereafter to look into that heaven of heavens, where the glories of Redemption will be more peculiarly revealed, and where the Lord God Almighty may be for ever unfolding to our view those plans which occupy His infinite mind.

REFLECTIONS.

1. From this subject we are led to admire the character of God's Government.

He governs good men—he governs angels—not by physical strength, but by *moral* influence—not by an arm of arbitrary power, but by appealing to the noblest sympathies of moral nature. He does not command his Potentates to take their stations, and keep worlds in awe by thunders of despotism. But he sends forth His own Son, in the mild majesty of the Prince of Peace; and he makes His angels ministering spirits. "In the fullness of time," he selects our world, as a theatre, on which to make one grand exhibition of His own character—calculated to secure the love, respect, and confidence of all worlds. And thus good beings, in all worlds, are made obedient and loyal subjects, from choice;—not by force. This is emphatically a *free* Government. This is a kind of government worthy of rational beings, and worthy of God.

2. How exceedingly limited are the views of those, who think that the great object of Christ's coming into our world was, "to publish a good system of *morality!* and to set us a *good example!*"

How contracted and pitiable are their thoughts of Christ! O, ye men of reason, who yet see no grandeur in the heights of Calvary;—commune with your Bible—commune with your God—if peradventure ye may yet "behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world;" and may, like learned Paul, be brought to count all human science "but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord."

3. We learn, how very imperfect are the views of those, who suppose, that the *only* object of Christ's coming into our world was to *save sinners.*

This was indeed one great object, and worthy of our endless gratitude:—But Oh, what is the salvation of millions who creep on earth?—what is this, compared with those glorious displays of God's character? or compared with that eternal confidence in His government, which is inspired among the loftier and wider provinces of His empire? Sinners

can now accept the offered grace, and angels will rejoice, and give glory to the Lamb; or sinners can now despise the Saviour's love, and *trample on His blood*, and fall under his curse, but those same angels will still celebrate His goodness, and adore his eternal justice.

4. We learn, in the next place, from this subject, that we ought never to distrust the wisdom of Providence, even in events which seem *dark and mysterious.*

Little did the mourning disciples think, when their Lord was crucified and buried, that from the darkness of Calvary a light of Redemption was bursting forth on our ruined race. And little do *we* think, when clouds of fearful portent may seem to hang round our Churches, and when thick darkness broods over more than half the nations—little perhaps do we think, what a Spirit of lightning from on high may soon break forth to electrify and purify our Zion;—what showers of heavenly influence may soon descend, to flow out in streams of salvation through the world. But let us never despair. Let our fervent supplication ascend up continually,—*Arise, O Lord God, into thy resting-place, thou and the Ark of thy strength; make the voice of truth to be heard by the slumbering millions; and make thy name glorious over all the earth.*

5. From this subject let Christians be provoked to *self-denying sacrifices* in the cause of humanity, and untiring *devotedness* to the Saviour.

Says St. Paul, "The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if One died for all, then were all dead; and that He died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him, that died for them and rose again." O Christian—knowing the terrors of the Almighty, when pressing heavily upon the poor convinced sinner; knowing the only Saviour, who could remove that heavy load of guilt; knowing the only Rock of safety amid the terrors of a crumbling Universe; having seen the glory of a reconciled Jehovah, "as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ;" can you ever cease to pray, that others also may build on that Everlasting Rock—and that "we all, with open face beholding, as in a glass, the glory of God, may be changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord?" Having stood on Mount Calvary, and seen, with an eye of faith, that great Sacrifice, which fills heaven with adoring wonder and praise; having "entered into the holiest by the blood of Jesus;" and held "communion with his Father and your Father—with His God and your God;" and having a "name written in the

Lamb's book of life," for your security when "worlds are burnt up;"—can you now shrink from any effort, which might make an ungodly world to feel, that there is Foundation to the Christian's faith?—Can you decline any sacrifice, which might quicken the wings of "the Angel having the everlasting Gospel to preach?" Remember, brethren, *your* responsibility is greatly increased by your *knowledge of duty* and your *personal relation* to the Saviour. Possibly a thousand fold heavier weight of responsibility rests upon you, than upon your rich and covetous neighbor. Now, then, when the Redeemer's great promise is fulfilling—when his Spirit is hovering around us, and is beginning to move on nations long enveloped in darkness; let there be a moving army of the faithful;—let our "youth of promise," and all "the saints bestir themselves like angels;"—let the ministers of God be "flames of fire;"—from the "high places of Zion" let there be a going forth of all that is elevated in thought, and bold in enterprise, and self-denying in piety, for quickening this poor drowsy world, and bursting away from it the chains of darkness and hell, and reclaiming its degraded nations to the holy empire of God.

6. From this subject let the wicked and the worldly, amid the blaze of gospel light, be constrained to repent and believe.

Sinner, *look on Him, whom you have pierced, and mourn.* Cannot the love of Christ dissolve your soul in sympathy and penitence? When he poured out that blood, "which was to sprinkle many nations," all nature sympathised in His sufferings. And why did the rocks rend? why did the earth quake? why did the dead awake? why did the sun hide in darkness? why did the Eternal Son assume our nature, and expire in agony? It was that he might redeem rebels, such as we are, from *eternal burnings*, and wash them from guilt in his *own blood*, and clothe them in the splendor and *likeness of their Redeemer.* And have you no gratitude? Is your heart harder than the rocks, which rent asunder!—more insensible than the dead, who started from their tombs! Ponder well the theme. For "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin;" and *never* will you repent—*never* will you abhor sin—*never* will you love Christ—if not when standing by his cross, and "beholding how *He loved us.*" Was ever love like this? The Son of God yielding to death, "*for your sakes!*" And what a death! It was not that "His face sweat as it were great drops of blood;"—not that His hands and feet *were nailed to the accursed tree;* not that His head was *crowned with thorns*, and His body pierced by the *soldier's sword.*

It was "the hour of the travail of His SOUL! It was the hour, when He, whose "sword is bathed in heaven," cried, "AWAKE, O SWORD, AGAINST MY SHEPHERD, AND AGAINST THE MAN THAT IS MY FELLOW." Enter into the meaning of those words, coming, as they do, from the mouth of the Almighty! Think of that sword of Omnipotence, descending with its dreadful weight upon God's own Son! and remember, *He was our Substitute!* "He was wounded for *our* transgressions; He was bruised for *our* iniquities; the chastisement of *our* peace was upon Him; and by *His* stripes *we* are healed." Blessed Jesus! and didst thou *voluntarily bow thine head* beneath the stroke, and thus finish thy part of the holy Covenant?—and shall we not repent of sin, and believe on thy name?

In view of that Covenant, sealed with blood, does one heart still linger, and "go after its covetousness!"—"RETURN UNTO ME, FOR I HAVE REDEEMED YOU, SAITH THE LORD." It would seem as though in view of such a Treaty, issuing in broad characters from Heaven, and ratified with blood on earth, a wicked world would, at once, give up their rebellion, and say with one voice, "Lord, we do return to thy kingdom." O haste, then, sinner, hasten, with true penitence and faith, to lay hold on that Covenant-promise, for to-morrow may be too late. "God is angry with the wicked every day." "His Spirit shall not always strive." He may arrest you suddenly. You never hear His *thunder* till the *lightning* has *struck*. O haste, then, "to be found in Him, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named," for there is no other refuge for the guilty.

Fellow-sinner, give heed to this expostulation; for "precious blood" has been shed! and blood is at stake between thee and me. I now leave thee at the foot of the Cross. *There* only is mercy. And "*to-day*" only is there any *promise* of forgiveness. Then "seize the kind promise;" for "we know not what shall be on the morrow. *To-day*,—all ungrateful as thou hast been, thou canst not open thy Bible, without being struck with the affecting truth, that the kindest words that ever dropped from the lips of God or angel, are addressed directly to thyself;—"*Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord.*" But *to-morrow*, "this gospel of the kingdom may be taken from thee." Or rather, that Holy Spirit, who alone can "guide thee into all truth," may be withdrawn,—and thou be left to "*believe a lie.*" And how aggravated must be the guilt of such as reject the salvation offered through the blood of the Son of God.

7. The reflection very naturally follows, that *incorrigible* sinners must be punished with immeasurable severity.

Say not, in hardening impenitence—"It will surely be well with the wicked, because God is merciful." We see to what results even the *mercy* of God *may* lead. It was *Infinite Mercy*, that was concerned in the events of Calvary; which wakened that agonizing cry, "MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME!" And sinner, "if these *things* be done in the Green Tree, what shall be done in the dry?" If Infinite Love could thus reveal itself in almighty vengeance on the Son of God, "who knew no sin," but only deigned to be our Substitute;—in what untold severity must it come on those, who are *personally guilty!* especially if their guilt is aggravated a thousand fold by a willful rejection of the All-Glorious Substitute! As you value life, then,—or as you fear death eternal—beware how you trifle with *blood!*—beware how you trifle with the *mercy of God*, revealed in the *death of His Son*. "Whosoever shall fall on this Stone, shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it shall grind him to powder." In the most benevolent deed that the heavens ever witnessed, God has demonstrated to the universe, *that iniquity can not go unpunished.* And having thus strikingly demonstrated, that *misery* is not inconsistent with *mercy*,—who shall dare to say,—(in opposition to God's word,)—that He will not eternally magnify "the riches of His glory in them that are saved," and in the view of all holy beings, by permitting them "to go forth and look upon the carcasses of them that have transgressed—where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched"—because they "have despised our Lord Jesus Christ?" If God failed not "to show His wrath, and make his power known," when *His own Son* was to be the sufferer,—think you that His abhorrence of sin will become all mildness, and pity, and weakness;—when His *incorrigible enemies* are to be the victims?—and when millions of angels are crowding round, to witness His truth, and to adore His justice! O ye blind guides—ye traitors! who cry, "Peace, peace,—when there is no peace, saith my God to the wicked;"—ye murderers! who would launch your fellow beings into a boundless ocean, under all their weight of guilt!—give back your delusions to "the father of lies;" "for the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever:" For "where the tree falleth, there it shall be:"—then "he that is filthy, let him be filthy still."

Finally, we learn from this subject the great propriety of frequently commemorating the dying of the Lord Jesus.

We think it proper, in a suitable manner, to commemorate great names and great events. The noblest feelings of our nature are thus improved. And frozen be the heart that would withhold due respect from the illustrious dead! Well then, here is "a name, that is above every name that is named." Here is One, who, "by the offering of Himself," has released millions from the bondage of Satan, and from the pains of the second death; and raised them to the "liberty of the sons of God." Here is an event, the blessed influence of which is now felt in both worlds, and will extend for ever. Here is the consummation of a treaty, which binds together the heavens and the earth—which restores man to communion with his Maker—which breaks for ever the power of Satan—which unites in one grand confederacy the wise and good of all ages, all nations, and all worlds;—and which acknowledges the SUPREMACY OF HIM, "whose right it is to reign over all." In comparison with this name and this event, then, let names of patriots and venerated statesmen be forgotten—let the ever memorable day of a nation's birth be commemorated no more: But O, let the great sacrifice of Him, who conquered death and hell, and reconciled earth and heaven, be often commemorated. Let these sacred memorials "show forth the Lord's death, till He come." And when, amid the wreck of worlds, this *theatre of blood* shall be seen no more, we will sing, with the "ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands, WORTHY IS THE LAMB, THAT WAS SLAIN, TO RECEIVE POWER, AND RICHES, AND WISDOM, AND STRENGTH, AND HONOR, AND GLORY, AND BLESSING;—FOR THOU HAST REDEEMED US TO GOD BY THY BLOOD, OUT OF EVERY KINDRED, AND TONGUE, AND PEOPLE, AND NATION."

That song is already begun. It will swell with louder and still louder and sweeter notes for ever. That song tells, in few words, the full meaning of the ordinance before us. But how distressing the thought, that multitudes around perceive not its meaning. The god of this world now blinds their eyes, and hardens their hearts. They cling to earth—they "feed on ashes"—they "grasp at wind." But if ever their eyes shall be savingly opened—if heaven, with all its grandeurs, shall appear as desirable as a little spot of earth, or a breath of applause; if the prospect of hell, with its eternal horrors, shall be as appalling as the loss of property; then will they fly to the cross of Christ;—then will they joyfully commemorate that death, through which believers live,—through which God is glorified,—and through which angels are bound to His throne.

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SERMON IV.

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AMERICAN BOARD OF MISSIONS,

AT MIDDLETOWN, CONNECTICUT.

BY EDWARD D. GRIFFIN, D. D.

President of Williams College.

MAT. xxviii. 18, 19, 20.—*And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.*

I RISE to advocate the cause of missions to the heathen and to plead for a dying world. My sole object is to enfore the claims of five hundred millions of perishing men by some plain and simple arguments which have affected my own mind. And I have chosen this text because it contains some of the arguments and suggests the rest. Both the authority of Christ and his personal reward are here distinctly brought to bear on the subject. For his obedience "unto death" he received the inheritance, including "the heathen" and "the uttermost parts of the earth,"* with authority to manage the whole estate. This

* Ps. ii. 8.

authority he employed in sending forth missionaries to disciple all nations and to bring to him the unnumbered millions promised for his seed.

My first argument then is founded on the authority of Christ. The injunction in the text was not addressed to the eleven exclusively, but to them as depositories of the divine commands, and through them to the whole body of ministers in every age. This appears from the promise subjoined, "Lo, I am with you alway, *even unto the end of the world.*" Indeed the eleven were expressly commanded to transmit to their successors all the injunctions which they themselves received, one of which was to disciple all nations. "Go ye—and *disciple all nations,*—teaching them to observe *all things whatsoever I have commanded you.*" This command then is now sounding in the ears of the ministers and churches of the nineteenth century.

And yet some when called upon for their aid are heard to say, I do not approve of such things: just as though they had a right to place themselves on the seat of judgment and decide for themselves what they will approve and what not, when the command of God is in their ear and his sword at their breast. Hark! did you not hear that thunder! "Curse ye Meroz;—curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not up to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty."*

My second argument is grounded on the example of Christ and his apostles. The Saviour of the world sent out a band of missionaries and charged them to "preach the Gospel to every creature;" "and they went forth and preached every where" "that men should repent." No one objection can be raised against missions at the present day, which will not equally lie against Christ and his apostles. The attempt is no more presumptuous now than then; the prospect is no more discouraging; the difficulties are no greater; the power that is engaged to give success is the same, for the promise remains unchanged, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

My third argument is founded on what we owe to the heathen. Is the Gospel no blessing to you? And would it not be an equal bless-

* Judg. v. 23.

ing to them? And are we not bound to extend to others all the happiness in our power? To say that Pagans can be as happy without the Gospel as with it, is to say that the Gospel is no blessing to men; and then you do not believe that it came from God. If the Gospel would be no blessing to the heathen, why do you preach or support it at home? Are you universalists? But still you find motives enough to preach or support what you call the Gospel at home. Why then not send it to other nations? If all mankind are to be saved, and mercy requires that the tidings be circulated with sectarian zeal through Christendom, to dispel the gloomy fears of former generations, why not send the glorious news to Asia? If things are so, let armies of missionaries be collected to stop those bloody rites which guilt and fear have invented to atone for sin and prevent future punishment. Let them hasten to stop the self-torturing pilgrimages, to take down the wretch who hangs voluntarily suspended by a hook thrust through his side, to drag the infatuated victim from under the car of Juggernaut, and the widow from the funeral pile, and terminate for ever the destruction of infants in the Ganges. Let them pour upon the ravished ear of Asia the tidings that all guilt was expiated on Calvary; that they have no need of their bloody rites, nor even of a reformation of manners; that they may live in pleasure here without apprehension, and enter on eternal pleasure hereafter.

Let it be true that all men will be saved, or even that men are as likely to be saved without the Gospel as with it, is the Gospel of no service in the present life, as a foundation of hope, as a purifier of manners, as a tamer of the passions, as a means of civilization, as a handmaid to science? What nation since the commencement of the Christian era ever arose from savage to civilized without Christianity? If you are the friends of the human family, I call upon you to weep over the degraded and comfortless condition of five hundred millions of people destitute of the light of science and the pleasures of refined society, subject, in a large proportion of cases, to all the hardships of the savage state, and in every instance to the horrours of a gloomy superstition.

But what believer in revelation except an universalist will say that men are as likely to be saved without the Gospel as with it? Be it so that *good* heathen will be saved, but the mass of the heathen are not good. They are sunk in the grossest vice. All the passions and all

the crimes that ever degraded man, there rage with little restraint. Owing to some defect which nothing but revelation can explain, man is universally inclined to evil. This truth, which every page of history attests, which a thousand poets have mournfully sung, which all the statutes of legislators have acknowledged, is confirmed by every day's experience. It is equally certain to every believer in Christianity that the grand means to reform the world is the Gospel of Christ. Let nations with all these native passions, run wild without this means of reformation, and what can you expect but that they will sink into the lowest depths of vice? Tell me not that their ignorance excuses them. Whence then that resentment with which you contemplate savages breaking into a village at night, burning houses, murdering infants in their mothers' arms, dragging their prisoners to the slow tortures of the stake, and rioting on their groans? Does ignorance excuse all the infernal passions and crimes of the heathen world? They will not plead this themselves. If they are conscious of no fault in these things, whence their resentment against each other? When they take revenge, do they not give judgment that Pagans may sin? Do they not this when they execute their laws on criminals? "their conscience —bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing—one another."* But if any doubt remains, read the Epistle to the Romans: contemplate the picture of the heathen world sketched in the first chapter, and the inference drawn in the third. And what said the charitable John? "We know that we are of God and the whole world lieth in wickedness."† The only means to reclaim the world is the Gospel of Christ. What nation since the world began was ever reclaimed without the Scriptures? Talk as you will of the salvation of pious heathen: let it be admitted if you please that now and then a Pagan becomes a good man; yet the mass of the heathen are grossly wicked, and will always remain so till reformed by the Gospel of Christ.

But I go further. Show me one instance in which God has ever saved or enlightened an adult without his word and ordinances. But his word and ordinances cannot travel to the heathen alone and there explain themselves. The living preacher must go with them. Even in the days of miracles you never hear of a Bible carried through the air to a distant land and there expounding itself, nor of a Pagan taught

* Rom. ii. 15. † 1 John, v. 19.

to read without a human teacher. In the highest reign of miracles and inspiration, prophets and apostles must carry to men the word and ordinances of God, or no salvation was accomplished. You may take your opinions from yourself if you will; I will take mine from the word of God. And what does that teach? "The Scripture saith,—Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent?"* If this does not absolutely prove that no adult heathen can be saved, it proves at least that no salvation can come to him in the known and ordinary way. Every imagination then that the heathen will come in of themselves if let alone, is a bewildering fancy.

My fourth argument is drawn from the sacrifices of the missionaries themselves and the debt of gratitude which we owe them. To see these interesting youth, with the spirit of martyrs, offering themselves to die under an Indian or an African sun; for the love of Christ tearing themselves from parents and brothers, and sisters, to see them no more; taking an eternal leave of the scenes and companions of their youth; abandoning their native shore and their native tongue, to bear the tidings of a precious Saviour to distant nations; to see delicate young females, who have been dandled in the lap of parental tenderness, with a heroism which nothing but Christian principles could support, tearing themselves for the last time from the arms of trembling mothers and speechless sisters, to encounter the dangers of the seas, and the still greater dangers of a torrid clime, in order to support their husbands by their smiles and prayers in a foreign land, among sooty Pagans; this is a scene which makes selfishness blush and hang its head; which shames all the ordinary piety that is couched in ease at home trembling at self-denials. I beseech you to follow these precious youth with your prayers and your tenderest concern. They have gone in the service of our Father's family. They sacrifice all for us. Shall we not follow them with the interest of brothers and sisters through the groves of India and the forests of America? and when we hear of their trials, their dangers, their escapes, their successes, shall we not feel as though we were receiving accounts from our near kindred? When they tell us of the triumphs of Hindoo converts, or send to our

* Rom. x. 11—15.

ears the young hosannas of Syrian or Sandwich children, shall we not mingle our souls with theirs and join in the joy as though they were bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh? Yes, dear missionaries, we will remember you and all the sacrifices you have made till these hearts shall cease to beat. God Almighty go with you and keep you in the hollow of his hand till we meet you in heaven.

Sometimes, in restrained and modest terms, these beloved men hint to us their wants. I fear they do not tell all. I fear they may yet suffer in a foreign land for want of a little more of that wealth which is heaped up in America. Much has indeed been given; and I thank you and the American churches in the name of all the poor pagans of the wilderness. I thank you in the name of those blessed men who have forsaken all for Christ. When they lay their heads down far from mother and sister, your charity will spread their couch and cover them from the cold; your charity will furnish their table and refresh them when they are weary. I wish I could present to your view a thousand pagan children clothed in the garments which you have furnished, and learning to utter the praises of God out of the books which you have given. But many of you, I trust, will have greater joy at last. You will see them clad in brighter robes; you will see them touch the golden harp and hear them say, But for your instrumentality we had not come to this. Then, I know, your reward will be full.

I can only say, if you have any thing more to spare we shall gladly receive it. And what you give will cheer the interesting wanderer on the plains of Ceylon and the shores of Owhyhee, who has left all for Christ, and whose sacrifices and prayers I hope will prove the salvation of our children.

My fifth argument is, that foreign missions are likely to prove the most glorious means of grace to us at home. While you are feeling for pagan souls and sending your sons to them, I firmly believe that your prayers and bounty will return into your own bosom. Such confidence I have in God, for I have heard him say, "He that watereth shall be watered also himself." I believe that while you are anxious to raise heathen nations from death, you will be enabled to shake off your grave clothes yourselves; that while you are seeking to draw forth Indian children from their sepulchres, and present them alive to their rejoicing parents, your own children will start into life by your side; that while

the love of distant nations glows in our hearts, it will melt us all down into love to each other, and burn up all our jealousies and strifes. Some of these effects I seem already to discern. God grant that they may increase, until the joy of America shall respond to that of Asia, and in one burst of praise rise united to heaven. May your charities return into your own bosom and that of your children for days and years, and an eternity to come.

My sixth argument is, that all the wealth of the world was given to Christ as a recompense for redeeming our souls; and shall the ingratitude of man withhold from him his hire? It will not always be thus. The time will come when "*Holiness to the Lord*" shall be written on all the possessions of men, on the very "bells of the horses;" and when "the pots in the Lord's house," (those used for culinary purposes in the families of the priests,) shall, in point of holiness, be like the bowls before the altar," which received the blood of the victims until it was sprinkled; and when "every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be Holiness unto the Lord of hosts."* The common vessels used to dress our food, instead of being regarded as instruments of luxury or display, like our Bibles and Psalm Books, shall be all for God. Men will write *Holiness to the Lord on every dollar and on every foot of ground. They will no longer labour to hoard, but to do good.*

That will be such a generation as has not yet appeared. A few scattered individuals have approached towards this character, but the mass of mankind in every age have held their property as their own, and not as a sacred deposite. With multitudes the thought of giving to God never entered their minds. Go to them for their proportion to support the Gospel at home, and they will turn you away or deal out a paltry pittance that makes you ashamed. Go to them in behalf of the heathen, and they have nothing to spare. Though their poorer neighbours are giving by handfuls, they have nothing to spare. They are so in debt for new lands and tenements, that they cannot give a cent to save a world from death. It is not more evident that Lucifer himself has a separate interest from Christ than that these men have. Wrapt up in themselves, they mean that the universe shall take care of itself. It is not for them to go abroad to inquire how it fares with other na-

* Zech. xiv. 20, 21.

tions; their business is at home. In their own little sordid selves they lie buried, and not a meaner object is to be seen in the universe of God.

There is another class, including by far the greater part of the better sort, who are willing to give to Christ something like one or two per cent. of their income, but hold the rest with an unyielding grasp. It will be otherwise in that coming day. I say not what they will give, for God has not fixed the limit for obvious reasons. In the first place, the wants of men in different countries and ages call for different degrees of charity. In the second place, had God prescribed the exact amount, the contribution would have been no more an index to the heart than the payment of any other tax. As by this part of human conduct he specially intended to draw forth the dispositions of men, he left the proportion to be fixed by themselves, after giving them some general intimations of his will. The only intimations of the kind were contained in the Hebrew law; and even there he left much to the spontaneous motion of the heart. Enough, however, was fixed to serve as a general guide to the conscience. In the first place they were to devote the first-fruits of their fields and of their flocks: in the second place, they were to give to the Levites a tenth of all the products of both: in the third place, they were to consume another tenth in charity feasts with the Levites and the poor: in the fourth place, they were to suffer many expensive sacrifices, some fixed by law, and others voluntary. These four items cannot be reckoned at less than three tenths of their income. In the fifth place, the many contributions demanded for the poor, (some fixed by law and others voluntary,) together with all that was required for hospitality, are moderately estimated at another tenth. Indeed, under the pressure of all these laws, a conscientious and liberal Hebrew would hardly get through the year without parting with one half of his income. This page God wrote and hung out of heaven and retired, leaving men to follow their own judgment and inclination to the end of the world. In the day when *Holiness to the Lord* shall be written on all the possessions of men, this page will be read and better understood. Then a law which has slept through so many selfish ages will be revived again, and holy men will feel it a privilege to give something like four tenths or one half of their income to God. And then they will look back on the contracted ages gone by, with much the same surprise as that with which we review the slave-trade or the superstitions of the tenth century.

And all these increased contributions will be wanted. A little calculation would surprise you here. The single work of furnishing the people of the United States with Bibles for a century to come, almost exceeds belief. If we increase in numbers as we have done, before this century runs out more than six millions of Bibles must be annually issued to supply our own population. To raise up ministers, too, for the unnumbered thousands that will inhabit these states, will require perhaps a still greater tax. And among other cares poor forsaken Africa must not be neglected. Her crime of having a sable skin must not exclude her from the kingdom of heaven. Great will be the expense of training up her sons to serve at her altars: and this charge must fall chiefly on America. Here, as in no other civilized nation on earth, materials may be selected from a million and a half of her race. Nor are Bibles and ministers all. Expensive missions, for a great many years to come, must be supported in every part of the pagan and Mahometan world. And this expense must chiefly fall on Christians at home. Missionaries cannot be fed by ravens, nor will the heathen themselves support them. All the disposable wealth of Christendom will be put in requisition. Those hundreds of thousands which are now rusting in the coffers of the rich must be brought forth. Those mighty sums which support wars and theatres must be consecrated to God. No longer must wealth enough sleep in a single commercial city to convert a nation. No longer must any Ananias and Sapphira keep back a part of what they have professedly devoted to the Lord. Let all professors of religion hear this.

Already this reviving spirit of liberality has begun to appear. Princely fortunes have been given by some; thousands and tens of thousands by others. The poor labourer has divided with God his hard-earned gains. Women have given up their ornaments. Children have thrust forward their little hands to drop their all into the missionary box. The world are fast waking up to the conviction that the silver and the gold are the Lord's.

My seventh argument is, that these exertions are necessary to bring to Christ the seed and the kingdom, the victory and the triumph, promised him as his reward. This world belongs to Christ. No other being has a right to erect an interest on this ground. And yet, after the lapse of eighteen centuries, two thirds of the earth remain in pagan

or Mahometan darkness. Ought so great a part of a world, which Christ has redeemed and owns, to continue in the hands of his enemy? If the suffrages of nations were to be collected, what would a redeemed race say? To whom would they assign a world given to Christ for redeeming them? Would they resign it to his enemy, who has despoiled it of its Eden, and covered it with briers and thorns, and turned it into a great charnel-house? or would they give it to him who came to rescue it from the hands of destroying devils, and died to save their souls? What is the vote of a redeemed race on this subject? If human instrumentality is wanted to drive the usurper from his seat, shall not a whole race rise up to the effort? Christ could have conquered his enemy without instruments; but he chose to bring in the nations in a way suited to moral agents, by instructions, so conveyed as to favour calm reflection, that is, through human organs; and he chose to employ men as co-workers with him, that he might train them to benevolent action. He is not dependent on us for his happiness. It is the height of benevolence that he is willing to consider the rescued nations as his reward. It is like one who, in the division of spoils, selects a captive for his portion, and makes the release of that unhappy one the gain most welcome to his heart. And vast indeed must be the good that can satisfy the benevolence of the Son of God, and be an adequate reward for his wonderful obedience "unto death." Let him have the infinite joy. And if human instrumentality is wanted, let the whole mass of Christendom rise up to the work. Is there a wretch so withered and debased that he will not do all in his power to push things forward to this glorious issue?

The Redeemer began his triumph when he ascended from Olivet. At the moment of parting from his disciples, he was surrounded with no outward lustre. Perhaps the bright cloud, which received him, contained the habiliments of glory, with which he was ever afterwards to be arrayed. Decked thus in his regal robes, he began his triumphant march; returning in state like a glorious conqueror to his royal city. I see him attended with "thousands of angels" and "twenty thousand" "chariots of God," leading "captivity captive,"* with death and hell chained to his chariot wheels. I hear them shout, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord

* Ps. lxviii. 17, 18.

strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. [The Lord who has returned with glorious scars, a Conqueror from his wars.] Lift up your heads, O ye gates, even lift them up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in."*

Early, too, he commenced his triumph on earth. In the wonderful campaign he went forth single-handed against two worlds. He girded his sword upon his thigh, and marched directly into the heart of Satan's kingdom. Wherever he went he conquered. At his approach temples and altars fell; oracles grew dumb; the Roman empire, the chief seat of Satan's visible kingdom, shook to its centre, and afterwards opened to the Conqueror, and fell prostrate at his feet. He marched through the nations, breaking down the prisons which Satan had reared to confine his wretched captives. Millions, who had been immured in dungeons from their birth, were brought forth to the joyous light. Wherever he came, freedom and joy sprung up around him. His trophies were not wasted provinces, but souls delivered from the destroyer. The high-minded spirit of chivalry celebrated the feats of disinterested knights, who roamed the kingdoms, as imagination feigned, to deliver oppressed females from enchanted castles, or from the grasp of giants and genii: but how much more benignant a deliverer is here; marching through the nations, and rescuing those who had no helper, from the tyranny of Satan. God speed thee, thou glorious Conqueror. Go on and prosper; and may the blessings of millions ready to perish, come upon thee. We will follow the wheels of his triumphal chariot, and shout as we go, "Hosanna to the Son of David: blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest!"

His triumphant kingdom commenced among the Jews at Pentecost, and among the Gentiles at the baptism of Cornelius. From that time it spread like lightning through all the countries from Spain to India, and from Scythia to Ethiopia, until in three centuries it mounted the throne of the Cesars. But after it had breasted an embattled race for three hundred years, and had placed its foot on the neck of a subjugated world, it fell by luxury and pride,—by an assumption of lordly dominion, and by ingrafting upon the simple institutions of Christ the pomp and pageantry of pagan rituals; until in punishment one half of the dominions which had been rescued from the prince of darkness was

* Ps. xxiv. 7—10.

given back into the hands of Mahometans, and the rest sunk under the tyranny and mummeries of Rome, until it lay conquered and besotted at the feet of the man of sin.

But this and every other enemy shall be destroyed. To complete the triumph of the Redeemer on earth, Satan must not only be again expelled from the Roman empire, but be bound "a thousand years," that he "deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years—be fulfilled."

And when all his elect are brought home and displayed in one happy family around the throne, with what infinite joy will he bend over his redeemed Church, and contemplate their blessedness, and hear their praise. And what glory and honor and blessing will their bursting hearts for ever ascribe to him. John had a vision of this scene and makes the following report: "After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands: and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four living creatures, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, Amen; blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen."* At another time he saw a grand jubilee held in heaven in honour of the Lamb; the redeemed first beginning the song, the angels then striking in, and before it was done the whole creation employed in the bursting praise. "And when he had taken the book, the four living creatures, and four and twenty elders [the representatives of the whole Church] fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and [about] the living creatures, and the elders; (and the number of them

* Rev. vii. 9—12.

was ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands,) saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches, and wisdom and strength, and honour and glory and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing and honour and glory and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. And the four living creatures said, Amen; and the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever."*

How delightful to contemplate the honours which encircle the Lamb in the midst of his Father's throne. After wandering an exile from heaven for more than thirty years for our revolt, how joyous to know that he has found a home. After the crown of thorns, we are happy to see him wear the diadem of the universe. After depending for bread on the charity of his female followers, we are glad to see him the Heir of all things, and able in his turn to impart to others. After being so long neglected and despised by men, we rejoice that he has found those who know how to honour his worth; we exult to hear the shout of all heaven in his praise. After the agonies of the garden and the cross, we sing and shout for joy that he has found infinite and eternal delight in the glory of his Father and the salvation of his Church. Let him have his happiness and his honours. Amidst all the sufferings of life it shall be our solace that the despised Nazarene has found his throne, —that the man of sorrows is happy at last. Of all the luxuries that ever feasted the human soul, the sweetest is to see the Lamb that was slain in the midst of his Father's throne. We will embalm his name in our grateful hearts. We will embalm it by our praise, which shall live while we have breath, and sink away upon our dying lips. And we will embalm it among the songs of the upper world. If we are permitted to come and stand where the elders bow, how will *we* bow and sing. When we shall look down to hell and see our old companions there, and then back to Calvary, and then look up and read the touching traces of love in those melting eyes among the prints of the nails and the thorns, we *will* embalm his name if love and songs can do it. We will tell all heaven of his love. If ever new inhabitants should come in from other worlds, they shall hear the story of Calvary. If commis-

* Rev. v. 8—14.

sioned in remote ages of eternity to visit other systems, we will carry the amazing tidings to them. We will tell them to all we meet. We will erect monuments of the wonderful facts on every plain of heaven, and inscribe them all over with the story of the manger, the garden, and the cross. While gratitude and truth remain, the name and the love of Jesus shall never be forgotten.

And now, my beloved brethren, I invite you to go with me and look for a moment over the interesting scene which is opening on earth. For many years the Christian world had been sunk in a profound slumber in regard to this duty; but for the last four and thirty years they have been waking up. He who has engraven Zion on the palms of his hands,—who never wants means to fulfil his promises,—has sent his heavenly influence to rouse the Christian world. He beheld the desolations of Zion and has come to rebuild her ruined walls. He heard the groans of his people as with harps on the willows they were weeping "by the rivers of Babylon," and has come to bring them again "to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads." Eternal thanks to God for what our eyes have seen and our ears have heard for the last four and thirty years. Eternal thanks to God for the increasing wonders which are rapidly opening on the world. And O can we restrain the bursting emotion? for ever blessed be his great and glorious name for what we have begun to see in our own land. It is more than thirty years since the Christians in Great Britain awoke; and they have been holding on their way with increasing majesty and glory, until that little island bestows annually more than a million of dollars upon strangers. It is fourteen years since New-England broke her slumbers, and now the mass of her population seems drenched in the missionary spirit. I saw the day cover the plains of Europe. I saw the westward-travelling light spread itself over these eastern states. Nine years ago I saw the rays of the morning tip our Presbyterian horizon. I saw the dawn blush deeper and deeper. I knew it would not all return again to midnight. I knew the sun would rise. At length I saw his golden limb above the eastern woods; and from the course of day I knew that soon the heavenly flood would cover all the plains to Arkansas and the Pacific. Already the influence of heaven has dropped upon the wilderness, and the yell of the war-whoop is changed to notes of praise. We must not stop till every Indian tongue has joined the general song. We must not stop till our influence has cheered the whole extent of South America. And then we must go forth to the islands, and hold on our way

till we meet our brethren in other fields and unite with them in completing the harvest of the world.

We owe the sincerest gratitude to God for giving us our existence in such a day as this. Many prophets and kings desired to see this day and saw it not. One spirit has seized the Christian world to send the Gospel, with a great company of its publishers, to all the nations of the earth. Missionary and Bible societies, those stupendous monuments of Christian charity, have risen so rapidly and in so great numbers throughout Europe and America, that in contemplating them, we are "like them that dream." These societies have already accomplished wonders, and are constantly stretching forward to future achievements beyond the reach of imagination. On the burning sands of Africa, where Christian feet never before trod, there is the holy band of missionaries, struggling, amidst dangers and deaths, to lead the sable tribes of Ethiopia to stretch forth their hands to God. On the plains of Hindostan, a "consecrated host" are translating the Scriptures into more than thirty different languages, spoken by a population greater than that of all Europe. On the borders of China they have produced a version which will give the oracles of God to one quarter of the population of the globe. In the southern islands a nation is born in a day. From the hill of Zion,—from the top of Calvary,—they are freighting every caravan of pilgrims with Bibles for all the countries of the east. Certainly the angel has begun his flight through the midst of heaven, "having the everlasting Gospel to preach—to every nation and kindred, and tongue and people."*

My soul is enlarged and stands erect as I look down the declivity of years and see the changes which these young Davids, under God, will make in all the earth. Countless millions are shortly to awake from the sleep and darkness of a hundred ages to hail the day that will never go down. I see the darkness rolling upon itself and passing away from a thousand lands. I see a cloudless day following and laying itself over all the earth. I see the nations coming up from the neighbourhood of the brutes to the dignity of the sons of God,—from the stye in which they had wallowed to the purity of the divine image. I see the meekness of the Gospel assuaging their ferocious passions, melting down a million contending units into one, silencing the clangour of arms, and

* Rev. xiv. 6.

swelling into life a thousand budding charities which had died under the long winter. I hear the voice of their joy. It swells from the valleys and echoes from the hills. I already hear on the eastern breeze the songs of new-born nations. I already catch from the western gale the praise of a thousand islands. I ascend the Alps and see the darkness retiring from the papal world. I ascend the Andes and see South America and all the islands of the Pacific one altar. I ascend the mountains of Thibet, and hear from the plains of China and from every jungle and pagoda of Hindostan the praises of the living God. I see all Asia bowing before him who eighteen centuries ago hung in the midst of them on Calvary. I traverse oceans and hear from every floating Bethel the songs of the redeemed.

> "The dwellers in the vales and on the rocks
> Shout to each other; and the mountain tops
> From distant mountains catch the flying joy;
> Till, nation after nation taught the strain,
> Earth rolls the rapturous hosanna round."

Come that blessed day. Let my eyes once behold the sight, and then give this worthless body to the worms.

THE

NATIONAL PREACHER.

Go....Teach all Nations....*Mat.* xxviii. 19.

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SERMON V.

By GARDINER SPRING, D. D.

NEW-YORK.

INTERNAL EVIDENCES OF REVELATION.

Psalm cxxx. 2.—*Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.*

It is no uncommon thing for men in Christian lands to profess a belief in divine revelation merely from habit and example Men who from their infancy have been instructed in the principles and duties of christianity, never sink to the degradation of paganism, and it is hard for them to descend to the reproaches of infidelity; though their religion may be only hereditary, and their belief in revelation fortified more by the traditions of their fathers than by any rational and sound conviction. Far be it from me to intimate that this prepossession exerts no benignant influence, or that it is not an influence of the most enviable kind. But this is not the reception which the Bible demands. The credentials of its high-born origin are of such unquestionable force and authority, that it solemnly and fearlessly invites a judgment which is the result of thorough investigation. Such an investigation is demanded, as the only course of safety to the sinner, of strong consolation to the christian, and of due respect to the Great Author of revelation.

In examining the question, Whether the Bible is the word of God, we should expect to find in the *Book itself* decisive marks of its divine origin. Nor is this expectation defeated. God has magnified his *word* above all his name. There are no such illustrations of the Deity

as are found in his word. Do the heavens and the earth declare the glory of God? Do the works of creation and the administration of providence disclose his divine nature, develope his love and wisdom and power, and all his essential greatness and goodness? and do they bear the impress of his hand? Much more do we see the hand and character of God in the Bible, and read his name, written as with sun-beams, on every page of this holy book.

Were there no other evidence, one would think that the attentive perusal of the sacred pages would be enough to convince any impartial mind that they are not of human invention. I say, an attentive perusal of the sacred pages; for no man ought to consider himself qualified to sit in judgment on the internal evidences of divine inspiration, who is not familiar with the Sacred Volume: And the more familiar he is, the more competent is he to scrutinize and weigh the testimony. The Abbé Winklemann, perhaps the most classical writer upon the fine arts, after descanting with great zeal and eloquence upon the perfection of the art of sculpture, as exhibited in the *Apollo Belvidere*, observes, with great enthusiasm, in recommending it to the admiration of those who would become eminent artists—Go and study it; and if you see no peculiar beauty in it to captivate you, go again; and if you still discern nothing, go again, and again, and again, until you *feel it;* for be assured it is there. To every lover of moral science we would say of the Bible, If he does not see the evidence of its divinity at the first glance, let him look again; and if he does not see it at the second or third perusal, let him look again; and if he fails to see it even then, let him still examine,—for he may be most confidently assured, that the evidence is there to be found.

It is this *internal evidence*, to which we would direct your attention in the present discourse. And we remark,

I. From a careful inspection of the Bible, we find that THIS BOOK ALONE ANSWERS ALL THE PURPOSES OF A SUPERNATURAL REVELATION.

When we advert to the different systems of religion, which either have obtained, or now obtain, we see they are radically defective, and fail of their object. The systems of natural religion are to a great extent unintelligible, and therefore never have reached the exigencies of the mass of mankind. They are all confused, uncertain, and contradictory; and have never been satisfactorily understood, even by the most reflecting men. On many, and most important points of faith, and duty, and salvation, they furnish no instruction whatever. Every system of human philosophy, or of ancient or modern Paganism, has been complained of by its own votaries; and its best instructed disci-

ples have seen and felt its utter insufficiency to the great purpose of a satisfacto ry religion.

The religion of the Bible, the more it is examined, will be found adapted to all the purposes for which a revelation could be given. The intellectual, moral, and physical constitution of men, in all the varieties of human ignorance, pollution, want, and misery; in all that is interesting in their hopes, or fearful in their apprehensions,—whether they respect a present or future state of being,—is so kindly and fully consulted by the principles of this revelation, that it must be seen and acknowledged to be without a defect. The Bible instructs men in all they need to know. It proclaims the character of that Infinite Being with whom men have to do: It informs us how this world came into existence, and how, and for what end it is governed: It reveals whatever is necessary for the glory of the Creator, and the happiness of the creature, and discloses the perfect harmony between the honour of the Great Supreme, and the best good of his subjects. It discovers the sinfulness and condemnation of men, and the method of their recovery: It reveals promises that are worthy of God, and threatenings that are required by the character and condition of men: It proclaims pardon, peace, and eternal life to the holy; and disaster, ruin, and death to the unholy: It reveals the object and end of whatever appears unseemly and untoward in creation and providence; and proclaims the design which the Mighty Governor of the world aims at in the whole series of events and revolutions which have taken place from the beginning, or will take place to the end of time: And it brings to our view the close of this earthly system, the day of final account, and the New Earth and New Heavens that shall never pass away. On all these topics, so infinitely interesting to men,—its instructions are clear, full, certain, authoritative. And all this is what a revelation must disclose, to answer the great purposes of religion for a race of fallen beings.

Where is the revelation that makes these disclosures except in the Bible? What other religion informs the world, or pretends to inform it on subjects of such high moment? From what other source can the mind of man receive satisfaction on every point of duty and of hope? Where shall we look for a system of instruction that meets every exigency, and answers all the purposes of a religion, except to the Holy Scriptures? If then it is reasonable to expect a revelation that is intelligible and full—that in all its essential principles is equally adapted to the wise and the unwise—that answers all the purposes for which we can conceive a revelation should be given; and if this revelation is found alone in the Sacred Scriptures, are not these Scriptures a revelation from God? We remark,

II. The inspiration of the Scriptures may be conclusively determined from THEIR HOLINESS AND PURITY.

When you look into the Bible, you see holiness and purity its great characteristics. It bears on every page "*Holiness to the Lord.*" When it speaks of God it represents him as the greatest and holiest Being in the universe, and extols his character as above all praise. When it speaks of man, it speaks of his primitive integrity with approbation, and of his subsequent apostacy and sinfulness, with pity and abhorrence. Every where it draws a discrimination between holiness and sin, between good men and bad, and in such a way as to leave the impression, that in the Writer's view, the difference is awfully wide, and the consequences of it everlasting.

The precepts of the Bible are all holy. They begin by requiring holiness in the thoughts and affections; then in the words; then in the conduct. The Scriptures require nothing less than *perfect* holiness. Universal, uniform, persevering holiness alone will bear a comparison with this unerring standard. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." This is its first and great Commandment. You open the Bible, and you find yourself in the presence of God. Him you are directed to worship in spirit and in truth; to exalt him above every rival; to enthrone him in your heart; to give him all honour and praise; to delight in his character; to be thankful for his mercies; to be submissive to his will; to rejoice in his government; to serve him with the whole heart, and to be assimilated to his moral image. And the second Command is like unto the first: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Here every grace and virtue are required, and every unamiable and unkind affection and action are forbidden. Every act of purity, justice, honesty, and benevolence is required; every act of impurity, injustice, hatred, and selfishness is forbidden. Every thing that can render man honourable and useful is enjoined; every thing that can render him mean, base, and injurious is forbidden. All that can diffuse peace and happiness in his own bosom and throughout the world is required; all that can rob him of peace and joy within, and diffuse disaster and calamity without is forbidden. All that can assimilate a creature of yesterday to his Maker, and prepare him for the family and fellowship of angels is prescribed; all that can render him deformed and odious,—that can sever the bonds of moral union, and fit him to be the companion of foul and miserable fiends, and the eternal outcast from God and holiness, is prohibited. This law of love tolerates no vice, and patronizes every virtue. No liberty is here allowed to sinful *passions and propensities*; but every corrupt principle, every lurking

source of sin is discountenanced and condemned. To every relation and condition of life the Bible extends the authority of its pure precepts, and prescribes the duties which, in all their diversified circumstances, men are bound to perform: while with unyielding severity, it frowns on every appearance of evil.

Nor are the peculiar doctrines and instructions of the Bible less holy than its moral precepts. The person and atonement of Jesus Christ—the forgiveness of sins through faith in his blood—the gratuitous justification only of penitent and reformed sinners—the office and operations of the Holy Spirit in the regeneration and sanctification of the soul—the love of Christ as the constraining motive to holy obedience—the death and final resurrection of the body—the day of judgment—the retributions of eternity—all announce the immaculate purity and holiness of the Bible.

This too is the character of all its institutions, all its privileges, all its peculiar ordinances, and all its examples. In its legitimate bearings every thing the Scriptures require and teach, every motive by which the Bible excites our fears or stimulates our hopes, is an expression of that comprehensive injunction, "Be ye holy, for I am holy."

Now is such a book the work of man? Who of all the descendants of Adam is the author of such a volume? All that we know of men represents them either as basely polluted and sinful, or painfully imperfect and depraved in their best estate. Was such a volume ever invented by the depraved mind of mortals? Is it possible that such a system of moral precepts, and such a system of doctrines, so excellent, so perfectly holy, should not have originated from a purer and more exalted Source? If the Bible be a human production, it is the production either of good men or bad. It cannot be of good men, because such men would not deceive the world by a fabrication. It cannot be of bad men; for they would never have thought of such a system of morals and instruction; or if they had thought of it, they never would have given birth to a system of perfect holiness and purest piety. Falsehood and immorality they might have enjoined, as the authors of false religions all have done; but truth and purity, such truth and purity as the Bible reveals, come from a far different Source. Infidels have found no other way of replying to this argument, than by preposterously denying the purity and holiness of the Scriptures. But our appeal is to the Bible itself. "I speak as unto wise men; judge ye what I say." We also remark,

III. Another argument in favour of the inspiration of the Scriptures may be deduced from THEIR PERFECT HARMONY.

There is a perfect harmony in all the varied contents of this book. There is a perfect harmony in its history, in its doctrines, and in its duties. Every writer agrees with himself, and all agree with one another and with facts.

The Scriptures were composed, not in a single age, but in the progress of sixteen hundred years; a period during which the views and opinions of men were in a state of great fluctuation; and yet the views and opinions here introduced are ever the same.

They were not written by one man, but by a great variety of men—men in different classes of human society, men imbued with different prejudices, men of science, and unlettered men; and yet perfect harmony and consistency pervade all their writings.

They all wrote upon subjects also, upon which men are peculiarly prone to disagree,—the subjects of religion. No writings could have been more liable to inconsistencies; and yet no one of them controverts the statements or opinions of another.

Most of the writers were entirely unacquainted with each other, and entirely unknown to each other; and yet in sentiment, in design, in every thing essential to harmony, there are the same facts, the same principles, the same grand object. If the writers of the sacred books then were not under the divine direction, whence this unexampled harmony?

Infidels we know have denied that this harmony exists. But the unfounded charge has been abundantly refuted by the critical investigation and faithful research of the abettors of divine inspiration. If we consider the different sources from which the inspired writers drew their narratives; the different designs which they had in the composition of them; the facility with which names and numbers are altered by imperfect readings; the omission of some events by one writer and the insertion of them by another; the different methods of computing time, which on close examination will be found to be perfectly consistent; the ambiguity of particular passages of which more ample illustration is to be found elsewhere; the use of the same word or term in different senses in different paragraphs;—we shall find that the detached passages on which infidels have laid so much stress, afford no ground for impugning the consistency of the Sacred Writers. The alleged contradictions, though at first glance apparent, are found on examination not real. Nor is there a single instance that does not admit of a rational solution. It would indeed require patience to illustrate passages seemingly at variance. The late Bishop Horne remarks, "Many and painful are the researches, usually necessary to be made

for settling points of this kind. Pertness and ignorance may ask a question in three lines, which it will cost learning and ingenuity thirty pages to answer. When this is done, the same question shall be triumphantly asked again the next year, as if nothing had ever been written upon the subject. And as people in general, for one reason or other, like short objections better than long answers, in this mode of disputation, the odds must ever be against us; and we must be content with those for our friends, who have honesty and erudition, candour and patience, to study both sides of the question.

After all that has been written on this subject, we are justified in saying that the harmony of the inspired writings is inexplicable upon any other supposition than that they are of divine original. You find the penmen of the Sacred Volume, whatever be their subject, all expressing the same thing. When they speak of God; when they speak of man; when they speak of holiness and sin, of redemption by Christ Jesus, and of the operations of the Holy Spirit, of heaven and of hell; there is no discrepancy,—but one grand design, one undivided scheme of truth, and duty, and retribution runs through the whole. However the sacred writers may vary in the manner and extent of their illustrations, they are all perfectly congruous. It is impossible this harmony could have been the result of any preconcerted plan; and if they did not speak under the influence of the same Spirit, how is this harmony to be accounted for? In the writings of what two uninspired men do you discover such wonderful consistency upon so nice and interesting a subject? You see the various schemes of human philosophy, the boasted treatises of natural religion, are one thing to-day, and another thing to-morrow. They vary with the wisdom, or the folly, or caprice of their authors, and change with every passing century and every revolution of public manners. But the Bible is ever the same. Not one principle of it is at war with another. The light which beams from its pages may have different degrees of brightness, but it all emanates from the same glorious Fountain; and wherever its rays are condensed and combined, they present the image of Him, who is himself Light, and in whom is no darkness at all. But, we observe in the next place,

IV. The Bible is the most inexhausted, exhaustless Book.

There is no book in any language, or of any age, that in this respect can be compared with the Bible. It is what its name denotes it to be, the Book *of all books*. The Bible is more inexhaustible than all other books, in as much as the uncreated intelligence is more inexhaustible than the intelligence of creatures. The extent, number, variety, and importance of the subjects which it treats; the weight and pertinence of its instructions, and the illimitable prospects it opens to

the mind, give it a pre-eminence in an intellectual view, unutterably beyond all other books that ever were written. It is truly a book of wonders. Its fulness is like that of the rising and full-orbed sun. The more you gaze at its unclouded splendour, and the more its emanating effulgence is diffused, the more do its resources appear unwasted and unwasting.

The Scriptures have taught all that men know concerning morals and religion. There is no article of faith, and no moral duty known by men, which is capable of being clearly illustrated and satisfactorily proved, which is not either expressly declared, or fairly and unquestionably implied in the Scriptures. The deep treasures of the Bible [illegible]asted many a vigorous and capacious mind; but there is no mind so vigorous and capacious as to have exhausted the Bible. There are men who have read and studied this volume most thoroughly and intensely, and who, the more they have read and studied it, have the more been charmed with its clearness and simplicity—who, at the same time, have been, at every step of their progress, more and more deeply convinced that it is a fathomless profound of light and knowledge. There are men who have made the Scriptures the object of their investigation for half a century, and who have examined every chapter and every paragraph, fifty or an hundred times; and who, with every fresh perusal, have discovered new thought and new causes for admiration and joy. The Bible has been read and studied, in all ages of the world, a thousand fold more than any other book. It has occupied the time and thought of men of the profoundest intellect, and of the most unwearied and patient research. What years and ages have passed away in the study of the Scriptures! What multitudes of individuals have been occupied in this elevated investigation! Reflect on the number now existing in different countries, faithfully devoting their time and talents to the study of the Bible; survey the immense libraries that have been written in defence and illustration of its truths; and though in every effort you shall see some new light elicited, you shall stand amazed to hear all confess that so much remains to be illustrated. The more deeply men have been absorbed in their contemplations upon the Bible, the more thorough has been their conviction of its illimitable resources. And it has been a conviction which has uniformly grown with their acquaintance with the Scriptures; which has never been diminished even by all the honesty, and prayer, and humility which they have brought to the research.

Now we maintain this is one of the grand peculiarities of the Bible. It is literally exhaustless; which cannot be affirmed of any other book. *There is* no book, except this, which a few careful readings of a sound

and retentive mind will not exhaust. And whence this peculiarity which may be claimed for the Bible? It is not voluminous; though on the subjects which it professes to treat it contains more than all other volumes combined. Whence is it that this little book should be literally so exhaustless? There is but one answer to this question. It is the production of the Infinite Mind. The Mighty Intelligence of the Only Wise God employed its energies in composing the Bible, and has condensed in this little volume facts, thoughts, principles and counsels, which will remain a source of instruction till the heavens shall pass away, and still be inexhausted and inexhaustible. We add,

V. The inspiration of the Scriptures may also be conclusively argued from the ELEVATION AND GRANDEUR OF THEIR DESIGN.

The Bible, as a composition, exhibits a unity and greatness of contrivance and plot, if I may so speak, altogether above the reach of human invention. Let a man sit down to the perusal of this book from beginning to end, as he would sit down to the perusal of a tragedy or epic poem, and he will discover the traces of a plan, which, in its commencement, its progress, its filling up, its close and catastrophe, lies far beyond the most inventive genius that was ever created. If the Bible be a human production, then with respect to its general device and contrivance, it is a most wonderful production, and such as never has been and never can be equalled. No unprejudiced man can take a comprehensive view of this Book, without being convinced that it presents a view of truths, and a system of operations, and a motive and end of its constitution, which could have been devised only by the All-Wise God. The Bible presents a plan which none but God *knew*, and which therefore none but God could *reveal*.

The Bible carries you back into the ages of eternity, where its wonderful plan was devised. It tells you of a method, a scheme of operations, which was laid out by the Eternal Deity, when there were no depths and no fountains of water, and before ever the earth was. The first visible expression of this mighty design was made in the creation of the world; and the earth we inhabit, was constituted the beautiful theatre on which this wonderful drama was to be exhibited. The Actors in this drama are the three glorious Persons in the Ever-blessed Godhead, angels, and men;—the inanimate creation, with all its richness, grandeur, and beauty, having been made and continued only in subservience to these, and destined to pass away at the consummation of this extended design. The spectators of this great drama are all intelligent beings. They constitute "the eye of the Universe:" and while each in his proper place has a part to act, he is the immediate

witness of the whole transaction. The time occupied by this sublime and momentous exhibition, extends from the creation, down to a period yet far distant and unknown, when time shall be lost in eternity, and these heavens and this earth shall flee away, and no place shall be found for them. The interest involved is the interest of every mind in the universe; for on the part he acts, is suspended the painful or blissful immortality of every individual in all worlds. In the early and progressive developement of this design, the Scriptures inform us, that a part of the angels kept not their first estate, and that through their instrumentality, the first parents of the human race fell, and introduced sin and misery into this world from generation to generation. On this apostacy they reveal a promised Mediator, who was to be the seed of the woman, and to the introduction of whom, in the fulness of time, all the dispensations of a general and particular providence bore a visible relation, and maintained a uniform tendency. They speak of a universal deluge—of the division of the earth among the descendants of its survivors—of the separation of a particular family and nation from the rest of this corrupted world, as the lineage of the predicted Deliverer;—they speak of the revolution and destruction of empires with a view to His advent, and the establishment and final glory of His kingdom. He is the Hero of the mighty drama, and when he appears, the Scriptures invest him with a character which the human mind would never have thought of. He is the child of an humble virgin, and yet the Mighty God; he is an infant in the manger, and yet the Everlasting Father; he is the reproach of men, and yet the adoration of angels; he is the crucified Saviour, the only Propitiation for sin, and yet the Lord of life, the Prince of the kings of the earth, the Head of a redeemed and sanctified kingdom, for whose sake he controls the kingdom of providence, sends down his Holy Spirit, and involves in his Administration all the concerns of men. As the part he acts becomes more prominent, and his merciful designs are evolved, every thing gradually assumes a new aspect. The conflict between light and darkness, holiness and sin, truth and error, happiness and misery, between himself and the powers of darkness, becomes more vigorous, and less doubtful in its issue, till he triumphs over all his enemies, and his kingdom is established from the rising to the setting sun, and maintains its supremacy, its purity, its peace, its joy, till near the close of this earthly creation. This great mystery is to be perfected,—the wonders of this august scheme are to be fully unfolded at the Last Great Day. Then the Hero—the Great Redeemer, shall be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe: Then the ultimate end of the whole *plan shall* be brought out to the view of an admiring universe, and it

shall be seen that the glory of its Author and the happiness of all the holy, were the moving impulse of the entire design: Then will the Redeemer descend from heaven in clouds, surrounded by the glory of his Father, and attended by all his holy angels: The dead will be summoned from their graves, and innumerable nations gathered around the throne of Eternal Justice: Then the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal: Then will the visible heavens pass away with a great noise; the elements melt with fervent heat; and the earth be burnt up: Then the Son will deliver up the kingdom to God even the Father, and God will be all in all.

This wonderful plan is revealed in the Bible. And was such a device, such a drama within the scope of human invention? Could such elevation and grandeur of design ever have entered into the head of man? O how God-like! Kings and heroes, nations and empires, in their earthly relations, are here as the drop of the bucket. Patriarchs and prophets, apostles and martyrs—the general assembly and church of the First Born—principalities and powers in heavenly places—the glorious Persons in the Godhead—earth, heaven, and hell; these are the persons and objects which here pass in review. Here are presented the perfections of God in unexampled greatness, loveliness, and beauty. Here are unfolded the mysteries of providence and the wonders of redemption. Every thing is noble, every thing refined, every thing holy, every thing advancing toward an issue which will ascribe "Salvation to him that sitteth upon the throne and to the Lamb for ever!" Well may angels desire to look into these things. Well may they watch the progress of this magnificent system with anxious scrutiny; for it is enough to enlarge the understanding and exalt the views of seraphim before the throne. We ask again, is such a plan the result of merely human invention? Is there not something here which must for ever have remained far beyond the grasp or discovery of mortals unenlightened from above? Would any child of Adam ever have thought of inventing such a plan? What human mind ever possessed so mighty a grasp, as to comprehend and originate this God-like design? But this God-like design is revealed to us by men, in most instances of no extraordinary talents; some of them plain shepherds, or humble, illiterate fishermen and carpenters: and yet they speak of these great subjects with the facility and dignity with which men of sound judgment speak of the common concerns of life. And how do you account for this mysterious fact? "What cause expanded the minds of these humble men over this unlimited field of thought? Whence is it that they never fell beneath the grandeur of their subject—never wandered amidst its complications"—never sunk in its unfathomable depths? We leave these inquiries with the rejecters

of revelation. To us it is clear, that no human mind ever invented this wonderful design,—that it bears the intelligence and signature of Heaven,—and that the men who were selected to disclose it, spake not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth. There is a majesty in this plan and in the manner of disclosing it, an elevation of thought, a strength, and extent, and greatness of conception, which cast the proudest efforts of human genius into the shade, and which indicate a far higher Source.

To the preceding we will only add,

VI. The inspiration of the Scriptures abundantly appears from THEIR POWER AND EFFICACY.

It is impossible to exhibit the force of this argument within the compass of a few paragraphs, when volumes have not exhausted it. It is a species of evidence of great importance, particularly to the mind of an unlettered man, while it has equal influence with the learned. Many an unlearned Christian may not be able to give a single reason for his confidence in divine revelation, deduced from a course of logical argumentation; while he can say, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the *power of God* unto salvation." He can tell you with emphasis, that he *knows* the Bible to be true, from the testimony of his *own heart*. "He that believeth hath the witness in himself." As he takes the Bible into his hands, he can declare that this book, under the influence of the divine Spirit, is able to separate his soul from sin; and that because the best feelings of his own soul are in such exact accordance with what the Bible reveals, he is abundantly satisfied it is the word of God. Others may hesitate and "go away;" but he will say, with Simon Peter, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life; and we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the Living God." He has a knowledge of the truth of divine revelation which is peculiar to himself. He knows the Bible to be true by his own experience. He loves the truths it reveals, and sees the beauty, and feels the infinite importance of them, as the food of his spirit and the foundation of his eternal hopes. The weakest and most ignorant child of grace will tell you, "Whereas I was once blind, I now see." And if you hesitate and complain, he will reply, "Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes." Once I was dead in trespasses and sins; now I am alive unto God. With all my remaining imperfections, I trust I am a new creature. I have new objects of affection, new motives of conduct, new hopes, new fears, new joys, a new character. I dwell as it were in a new world. I seem to have passed from *death unto* life, and to be under the influence of principles, which

while they humble, exalt me; while they purify, make me supremely happy; and the only counterpart to what I find within my own bosom, is in that sure word of prophecy, which shone as a light in a dark place, till the day dawned and the day star arose in my heart.

To this we know the infidel may reply, All this is of no avail so long as it extends not beyond the bosom of the narrator, nor can it be considered in any other view than as the result of strong impulse and ardent enthusiasm. But what if we could show the infidel ten thousand instances of this sort,—and these not confined to the unlearned,—nay, ten thousand times ten thousand instances in which men of the soundest discretion, and of acknowledged integrity should furnish the same narration! Ought not the testimony to avail? and would it not avail with ingenuous minds? And if in addition to this, it should appear, that in each of these multiplied examples, the transformation within has been followed by an accordant transformation without, and that the moral influence of the Bible upon the visible character and conduct is as great as its moral influence upon the soul!—Would not this constitute evidence which even a disingenuous mind would find it hard to resist? And yet, this is the evidence which has been constantly accumulating wherever the Bible has exerted its native energy. Witness the extensive propagation of Christianity and its correspondent results. Destitute of every adventitious advantage, supported by no secular power, and upheld by no worldly interest,—with no other recommendation than its intrinsic excellence, and no other patron than the God of heaven,—the gospel of Jesus Christ has triumphed over the opposition of men and devils,—visited every land and nation,—and in all its progress has multiplied its converts like the drops of morning dew. Its primitive promulgators and their successors have gone forth under the high sanction, "Thus saith the Lord,"—and nothing has been able to retard their career. They have marched onward in defiance of all the indifference of a world that lieth in wickedness, of all the arts of philosophy, and all the virulence of relentless persecution. Other religions have been devised by human wisdom, and propagated by the secular arm, and they have passed away, and left no memorial behind them, except the deleterious influence they have exerted on the human character; while the religion of the Bible has lived, and spread, and left its memorials in the moral purity and happiness of a great multitude which no man can number. There is not a spot on the globe, where the Bible has been suffered to exert its influence, but it has produced a moral reformation. Paul informs us what the effect of the gospel was upon the early Christians, where, after having enumerated "idolaters, effeminate, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners," he adds, "And such were

some of you; but ye are washed; but ye are sanctified; but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." Wherever the Bible has found access to the mind, it has been the light that has dispelled darkness; the voice that has disturbed the slumbers of sin; the sword which has pierced the soul; the hammer that has broken the flinty heart in pieces; the ethereal fire that has enkindled every gracious affection. Think of the myriads of each sex and every condition, rich and poor, bond and free, young and old, who have been delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son; cast your eye back through the long tract of preceding ages upon the multitudes, whose pagan ignorance and sottishness have been chased away; whose views have been rectified; whose passions have been restrained; whose consciences have been awakened; whose hearts have been sanctified; whose lives have been conformed to moral rectitude; and who have themselves been made meet for the coming inheritance; and you will have some just conceptions of the moral tendency of the Bible. Go and stand in the midst of some of those numberless scenes of wonder and of mercy, of sovereignty and omnipotence, which have thrown such a charm over these latter days and these ends of the earth, where the Spirit of Jesus has moved the assemblies of his people as the trees of the wood are moved by a mighty wind; where hundreds have trembled on the verge of eternal wo, and where after the storm was past, a "still, small voice" has whispered divine peace, and awoke their everlasting song; and you may appreciate the influence of the Bible. O! what an unbending heart must that be, that has witnessed one Revival of religion, and can still be in doubt, whether the Bible is the word of the all-powerful and all-gracious God!

And with these, there are effects still more extended, that are the legitimate results only of the Bible. The effects of the Bible on human society are such as no other cause has produced. It has mitigated the horrors of war; it has given effectual obligation to the nuptial vow; it has elevated the character and condition of one half the human species who were unnaturally degraded because they were not men; it has thrown its guardianship around helpless infancy and rescued it from the floods and from the flames; it has interposed its benignity in behalf of the inferior and dependent ranks of human society; it has constituted every church of God, and every Christian community an asylum for the widow and the orphan and for the poor and the needy; it has softened the rigours of despotism and broken the yoke of the oppressed; it has diminished the number of sanguinary revolutions, and *given mildness*, permanency, and force to public law; it has proved the

unchanging friend of literature and the arts; it has in every view diminished the sources of human misery and multiplied the sources of human happiness. It has opened rivers in high places and fountains in the midst of valleys. It has made the wilderness a pool of water, and dry land springs of water. From a world of barrenness and death, where there were nothing but briars and thorns and beasts of prey, already has it made a world of fertility and life, where trees of righteousness spring up and bear unwithering fruits, and where the lion and the lamb lie down together, and where, at no distant period, there shall be nothing to hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain.

These effects of the Bible, also, are uniform. Wherever they are found, the Bible has preceded them; wherever they are not found, the Bible is either unknown or has received no serious attention. Go where you will, where the Bible has exerted its proper influence, and you shall see its unvarying tendency, in the same holiness of heart and life, the same peace of conscience and joy in the Holy Ghost, the same social and public welfare. And in view of this native power and efficacy of the Bible, we ask, can it be a cunningly devised fable? Does not its moral influence furnish distinct and decisive evidence of its divinity? Let the infidel produce a volume which has accomplished what the Bible has accomplished, and I will at once receive it as from God. And if from a view of what the Bible has done, we reflect for one moment, what would be its influence on the world, were its principles and its spirit universally adopted, the argument in its favour is overwhelming. If we look forward to what it will yet accomplish, when every mind shall be illumined by its revelations, every heart purified, every life renewed, every land redeemed from its corruptions and bondage, and the whole world assume a character which shall be the exact counterpart of this omnipotent revelation; how irresistible will be the evidence, that the Bible is in truth the word of the Living God. This wonderful Book resembles its wonderful Author. From what we know of God in the visible universe, we need only to be acquainted with the Bible to be satisfied that it emanates from him.

Thus we see, that the *fitness of the Bible to all the purposes of a divine revelation*—its *holiness and purity*—its *perfect harmony*—its *inexhaustible fulness*—its *elevation and grandeur of design*—its *power* and *efficacy*—all combine to demonstrate that it comes from God. And what God hath written shall remain for ever. The heavens and the earth may pass away, but "my word," saith Jehovah, "shall never pass away."

God speaks to us, my friends, from every paragraph and sentence of

this Holy Book. It is his voice that we hear; his signature that we behold; his ineffable glory,—which, the more it is viewed in this bright mirror, may the more powerfully command our wonder and praise. When we approach these divine Oracles, and hear the voice of God sometimes speaking out of the midst of the fire, but more often from the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel; we may well bend our knee, and take the shoes from off our feet, for the ground on which we stand is holy. O, that divine influence might come down upon us from the Spirit of truth and grace, and beams from the Sun of righteousness break in upon our minds, as we contemplate these intrinsic glories of the Bible! Let the truth and weight of these revelations sink deep into your ears. As men of this world merely,—as creatures of time,—but especially as the proprietors of immortality,—you have a thousand fold deeper interest in the Bible, than in any other, or all other books. It is just as important, that you who have the opportunity, should become acquainted with the Scriptures, and believe, and love, and obey them, as it is that you should be saved. This book offers to you, beloved hearers, that which most you want,—that which is infinitely more to you than all other things,—glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life. I cannot but look upon the prevailing indifference with which the Word of God is regarded as one of the evils over which we are loudly called to mourn. You send the Bible to the ignorant and destitute; you carry it to every cottage and waft it to every clime;—and thanks to God that you do so; but to what extent is it studied in your chambers, read in your families, taught to your children? There is no surer evidence of living without God in the world, than living without intimate communion with the Bible. Who that does not mean to remain in impenetrable obduracy; who that does not purpose effectually to grieve away the Holy Spirit; who that does not form the deliberate resolve to close every avenue to the divine influence;—that is not prepared to plunge the dagger of the second death into his own bosom,—can live in the neglect of these Scriptures of God? And if you believe them, and understand them, will you refuse them the submission of your heart and your everlasting obedience? Do you accredit the stupendous truths contained in this Volume? and shall they waken no deep interest, and urge to no solemn preparation for your last account? I beseech you, think seriously of the weighty truths herein revealed from heaven. There is not one among them all that will not prove a savor of life unto life, or a savor of death unto death. It is even so. Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken, but on whomsoever it shall fall, it shall grind him to powder.

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SERMONS VI. & VII.

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THE MEDIATION OF CHRIST, THE GROUND OF THE BELIEVER'S TRIUMPH.

Romans viii. 34.

Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea, rather, that is risen again; who is even at the right hand of God; who also maketh intercession for us.

It is the genius of Christianity, that it gives a new and noble direction to the intellectual powers, while it exerts a controlling and sanctifying influence on the heart and life. It does not, indeed, change the original structure of the mind, but it quickens and elevates the faculties, by employing them upon objects of the most pure and exalted character. I know not whether the apostle Paul, independently of divine inspiration, was more indebted to the original fertility and grandeur of his intellect, or to the all-inspiring influence of the subjects he discusses, for the majesty which pervades the chapter from which my text is taken: but certain it is, that inspiration itself can hardly furnish a parallel to the sublimity with which the argument is here conducted. It is the mighty march of a mind acting in all the dignity of independent greatness, and fired and elevated by a principle no less commanding than the love of Jesus. The point which the apostle is here immedi-

ately labouring to establish, is the superiority of the Gospel to the Mosaic dispensation, in the motives which it furnishes to religious purity and obedience: and if you attend to the process by which he arrives at his triumphant conclusion, you will perceive that, at each successive step, his mind kindles with fresh rapture, and seems to be feasting upon new-discovered glories. After glancing at some of the most prominent peculiarities of the Gospel, all of which strikingly illustrate the happy condition of the Christian, he closes this part of his discourse with a magnificent climax, which mingles the power of a comprehensive genius, the glow of an exquisite sensibility, the triumph of an elevated faith, and the majesty of divine inspiration;—*Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth: Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea, rather, that is risen again; who is even at the right hand of God; who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, for thy sake we are killed all the day long: we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

It is the object of the following discourses, TO CONSIDER THE SEVERAL PARTS OF THE MEDIATORIAL WORK OF CHRIST, AS EXHIBITED IN THE TEXT; AND THEIR INFLUENCE IN SECURING THE FINAL TRIUMPH OF THE CHRISTIAN.

I. We will follow the order suggested by the apostle, and endeavour, first, to exhibit A BRIEF VIEW OF THE MEDIATION OF THE SON OF GOD.

1. And here the first thing that presents itself, is the CHARACTER of the personage by whom the mediatorial office is sustained: It is CHRIST that died. On this point, our inquiry shall simply be, *What saith the Scripture?*

To collect all that is said of this wonderful personage, would be to recite a large portion of the prophetical and historical parts of Revelation. We can only glance at a few prominent passages. The prophet

Isaiah describes the character of Christ by these remarkable appellations; *And his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of peace.* In the forty-fifth Psalm, the same exalted person, (as we are informed by the apostle Paul,) is addressed by the Psalmist in these words: *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.* Paul has declared him to be *God over all blessed for ever:* and again, the same apostle has said, that *by him all things were created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, all things were created by Him, and for Him.* Says the apostle John, who was permitted to behold the unveiled glories of God; *Every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.* And the same apostle has elsewhere said, *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* And finally, in the Revelation by St. John, Jesus Christ says of himself, *I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.* And elsewhere, *I am the First and the Last; I am He that liveth, and was dead, and behold, I am alive for ever more, and have the keys of hell and of death.*

But the passages of which those now recited are a specimen, only give a partial view of the character of Christ. It is the very same person who is characterized by the following description: *He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: He hath no form nor comeliness; He was despised and rejected of men. He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who shall declare his generation? For He was cut off out of the land of the living; and his grave was appointed with the wicked; but with the rich man was his tomb, though he had done no violence, neither was deceit found in his mouth.*

The former part of this wonderful character was displayed during the patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations, in all the intercourse which He

held with his people as the Angel of the covenant; but the latter part was never disclosed, till He assumed our nature and came to dwell upon the earth. But amidst all his humiliation, the glory which He had with the Father *before the world was*, was only partially obscured. It was the Sun shining through an eclipse. An Angel from heaven foretold his birth; and a choir of angels announced to the world his advent. At his command, the sightless eye-ball received the power of vision, and the tongue of the dumb man was loosed; the withered limbs of the paralytic resumed their office; the victim of leprosy escaped from his loathsomeness, and walked abroad in all the bloom and vigour of health: the iron-bound slumbers of the dead were broken up; the raging of the winds and the waves was composed; and even while He hung upon the cross, nature testified to his Divinity by a mighty convulsion. It is hardly necessary to say, at the close of this brief recital, that his character stands alone in the annals of the universe. Search through the heavens and the earth, and you will find nothing with which it admits of comparison.

2. Next to the character of Christ, our text leads us to notice his DEATH. It is Christ that *died*.

I do not deny that purposes were answered in the Divine administration, by the death of Christ, which have never yet been revealed to us; purposes, it may be, even more magnificent than those which relate to our own redemption. There may be other worlds than ours within the dominions of Jehovah, where a spirit of rebellion has been manifested, and the benefits of Christ's death enjoyed. And there may be other worlds still, where the inhabitants have never violated their allegiance to their Almighty Sovereign, in which the revelation of this wonderful fact may serve as a mirror to reflect the brightest of the divine glories. But it is not with other parts of the system that we are so immediately concerned. The death of Christ, for aught we know, may exert an influence of some kind or other, wherever there are intelligent beings; but in respect to ourselves, and the world to which we belong, there is no room for doubt.

Not only the general fact that the death of Christ procures our salvation, but something of the *manner* in which it operates to the accomplishment of this end, is made the subject of distinct revelation. *Christ*

hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, says the apostle, *being made a curse for us*. Not that the substitution was in every respect literal and exact: that would have been inconsistent with the perfectly holy character of the Son of God: but the sufferings of Christ had such a relation to the divine law, as completely to answer the purposes of God in the punishment of sin, and thus to constitute a proper ground of deliverance from the curse. In the cross of Christ, therefore, the claims of Divine justice are so answered,—the majesty of the Divine law is so maintained,—that God can now be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth. Accordingly, it is agreeable to the uniform tenor of Scripture, that we are redeemed by the *blood* of Christ; and that faith in Him as an atoning sacrifice, is one of the grand conditions of salvation.

Here, brethren, if I mistake not, is the hinge, on which the whole system of Christianity turns. It is the death of Christ, as a propitiation for the sins of the world, which gives the gospel its chief value, as a religion for sinners. Tell me not that He died merely to set an example of pious suffering, or to substantiate his claim as an ambassador of God. I do not deny that these were subordinate ends of his death; but compared with the grand object for which He suffered, they are only as the feeble glimmering of the glow-worm, to the condensed brightness of the noon-day sun. By limiting the influence of Christ's death to his example, you not only set all our immortal hopes afloat, and blot out the glory of the gospel, but you reflect upon the character of God, by imputing to him the weakness of incurring an amazing expense, without any sufficient end. Believe it, who will, that He who was *the Brightness of the Father's glory*, and who *made all things by the word of his power*, condescended to assume our nature, and die upon the cross, merely to exhibit to the world the faith and constancy of a martyr!

3. But you will ask, if Christ died to make satisfaction for the sins of men, what evidence is there that his atonement has been accepted of God? I answer, thirdly, there is complete evidence in the fact of his RESURRECTION. The apostle adds, *Yea, rather, that is risen again.*

The death of Christ, as we have seen, was the ransom which was paid for our redemption; but it is his resurrection alone, which renders our faith in his blood a rational act. If He had never come back from

the grave, we might have been attracted by the lustre of his example, and had our sympathies awakened by the story of his death, but it would have been delusion to have expected redemption by his blood. But when he came in triumph from the tomb, the scandal and ignominy of the cross were wiped away; and in the power and glory of His resurrection, we may consider God as setting his seal to the efficacy of his atonement. When Jesus *bowed his head, and gave up the ghost*, the sentence of condemnation was virtually reversed; but it was not till he had burst the bands of death, and appeared in the character of a Conqueror, that the believer's justification was fully manifest. '*For*,' as the apostle argues, '*if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life*;'—that is, *by his resurrection to life and glory*.

But our view of this grand triumph over the grave will be too limited, unless we consider it as the pledge of our own resurrection. Jesus rose as the Representative of his people; and the connexion is not more certain between the vine and the branches, or the head and the members, than between His resurrection and that of all his followers. You perceive, then, on what a firm foundation, this most consoling doctrine of our religion rests. You are not left to deduce it from the subtleties of metaphysics, or to collect it from vague and scattered intimations in the word of God: nay, you have something more than even a positive promise; for it is identified with the most illustrious fact in the history of Christianity. Never were the jeers of infidelity more out of place, than when they are directed against this life-giving doctrine; for, to say nothing of its inherent consolations, it is sustained by evidence, which it is beyond the power of wit or reason to gainsay.

4. The next thing which the apostle notices in reference to the mediatorial work of Christ, is his EXALTATION: *Who is even at the right hand of God*.

The phrase, *at the right hand of God*, is expressive of the highest dignity and authority. In taking possession of the mediatorial throne, Christ has acquired a dominion different from that which he held, as the Sovereign and original Proprietor of all things. It is a dominion founded on the covenant of redemption, and to continue till the final consummation. It extends to all beings and all events, It is His pro-

vidence that operates in the natural world with an unwearied and undecaying energy. His hand guides the revolutions of the planets, and the destinies of empires. He setteth up one, and putteth down another; and none can resist his power, or question his right. The same hand is concerned in directing the most insignificant of human affairs; in controlling even the irrational and inanimate creation. The insect that glitters in the sun-beam, or the atom that floats upon the breeze, is as truly the object of his superintendence, as the convulsion of a kingdom, or the extinction of a world. The principalities and powers of Heaven too, the shining ranks of angels, the glorious retinue of seraphim, the innumerable company of the redeemed, are all subject to his authority. The church on earth also looks up to Him as her Lawgiver and her Head; and He dispenses to her, through the ordinances which He has established, a Divine influence; and He has pledged the stability of his throne for her security and triumph. Nor do the powers of darkness, with all their malice and rage, escape from his dominion. Amidst all the weeping and wailing of that world, not a pang of agony is felt, not a shriek of horror is uttered, not a vial of wrath is poured out, but it is in some way or other subject to the mediatorial direction of the Son of God.

But the occasion which shall witness to the most triumphant and awful display of his authority, will be the general Judgment. Before He delivers up the kingdom to the Father, all nations shall be assembled before Him, and He shall separate the good from the bad, *as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.* You may send forth your imagination to collect every image of tenderness and majesty, of burning vengeance and melting compassion, of unutterable joy and overwhelming wo, and you will only have gathered materials for a faint description of this tremendous scene. But in this scene Jesus Christ is to preside. It is from His lips that the sentence is to proceed, agreeably to which, you and I shall pass off to the right hand or the left, according as it is a sentence of acquittal, or a sentence of condemnation.

5. It is in consequence of the exaltation of Christ, and may be considered as one grand purpose of his exaltation, that HE INTERCEDES FOR HIS PEOPLE. The apostle adds, *Who also maketh intercession for us.*

This part of Christ's mediation has particular reference to the sins of his own people; for, notwithstanding the pardoning mercy of God, and the renewing influences of the Spirit, have been extended to them, they are still, in a greater or less degree, the victims of corruption. But He who has promised that they shall be kept by his mighty power through faith unto salvation, has ordained the intercession of Jesus as a means by which this important end is to be secured. In what manner this intercession is carried on, we are not particularly informed; but it seems probable, from the nature of the case, as well as from some intimations in scripture, that it is by presenting his human nature, as an unceasing symbol of his labours and sufferings for the church. He has no need, brethren, in pleading our cause, to make use of many words: action is the most powerful eloquence. The soldier who has bled in his country's battles, has only to bare his bosom, and show you his wounds, and he makes a much stronger appeal to your heart, than he could by the longest and most moving addresses. So our great Intercessor has only to display the prints of the nails in his hands, and of the spear that pierced his body, and how can He fail to be an all-prevalent Advocate? It is through this part of His mediatorial office that Christians are preserved from final apostacy, obtain the forgiveness of sins committed after their renovation, and have a reception secured into the heavenly mansions;—*seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.*

How delightful a view of the character of Christ is presented by the fact, that in that world of joy whither He has gone, and amidst all the glories of his exaltation, He never for one moment withdraws his gracious regards from those worms of the dust, for whom he laid down his life; that amidst all their waywardness and wanderings, He should manifest his unchangeable love by a perpetual and all-powerful intercession. With what gratitude and praise to the Redeemer should we reflect, that every measure of grace sent down to us from the Father of mercies, every visit we receive from the Holy Comforter, every well-grounded hope of future and eternal bliss, is in consequence of his ascension *into heaven, now to appear in the presence of God for us.* Blessed Jesus! we *will* praise thee: *Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them!*

SERMON VII.

ROMANS VIII. 34.

Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea, rather, that is risen again; who is even at the right hand of God; who also maketh intercession for us.

II. HAVING followed the apostle through the several parts of Christ's mediatorial work, we now proceed to consider THEIR INFLUENCE IN SECURING THE BELIEVER'S ACQUITTAL AND TRIUMPH. *Who is he that condemneth?*

1. The believer hath nothing to fear from EXTERNAL AFFLICTIONS.

I do not mean that he may expect an exemption from them; for so long as he continues in the world, he must be a sharer in its trials and sorrows. Nay, it may be that his very religion, full of consolation and hope as it is, may be the means of nerving against him the arm of power, and scattering around him the fire-brands of persecution. But do you know that the situation of the Christian, in the very darkest scenes of adversity, is an enviable situation? Do you know that the arms of everlasting love are beneath that Christian's soul, and that the power of Divine grace is pledged for his consolation and deliverance? That gracious Redeemer, whose blood flowed for his salvation, and who has manifested towards him love stronger than death, hears every groan, observes every tear, and pours into his heart streams of living consolation. Moreover, He has promised that all things shall work together for the Christian's good: not even those afflictions, which lacerate the heart with agony, are accepted: they are included in that gracious covenant, which secures to him all the benefits of redemption. Oh, what affliction may not be accounted light, when it is regarded as an expression of the love of Christ? Is it not an enviable portion to be called to weeping, if our tears may return in a harvest of glory?

Mourning Christian, lift up your head and rejoice. There is a light faintly beaming through that cloud which overshadows you, which will ere long break forth in all the fulness and splendour of noon-day. At

no distant period, you will know that every throb of anguish which you feel, had in it the elements of the most pure and enduring joy. Fear not to go down to the very darkest spot in the vale of adversity. As sure as Jesus is faithful to his promises, He will, in due time, redeem you out of all your trouble: for what *shall separate you from the love of Christ?*

2. The mediation of Christ ensures to the believer a triumph over INDWELLING CORRUPTION, and the SUGGESTIONS OF THE ADVERSARY.

There is a conflict, known only to the Christian, which calls for unceasing watchfulness, and constitutes the source of his severest trials; insomuch that it once led an apostle to exclaim, *O wretched man that I am; who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* It results from the partial and occasional prevalence of sin in a soul, which has acquired a prevailing relish for holiness. This enemy of God and man, now appearing in the form of worldly-mindedness, and now in the grosser garb of sensual affection, the Christian cannot find it in his heart deliberately to tolerate; but where is the Christian who will not testify, that as often as he has succeeded in gaining a victory over this internal foe, so often it has returned upon him, and demanded all the vigour of fresh opposition? Do you sometimes yield to the desponding thought, that this war within will ultimately terminate in favour of your enemy? Never fear that, Christian. Before such an event can take place, the pillars of the mediatorial kingdom must fall, the intercession of Jesus must prove ineffectual, and the grand purposes of his exaltation be defeated. Do you sometimes tremble, lest the insidious attacks of the adversary should succeed, and in spite of all your vigilance, and all your activity, you should finally fall a victim to his wiles? Tremble you may for your own weakness; but it is unworthy of a soul that has been washed in redeeming blood, and has the gracious assistance of the Spirit made sure to him, to shudder at the approach of *any* enemy. That exalted Redeemer who has gone into the heavens, watches every plot, and every movement of the adversary against you; and He has set bounds to his career of temptation which he can never pass. Great and formidable as this enemy is, there is One greater than he; One who has acquired a glorious triumph over the powers of darkness, which their combined energies can never reverse; One who has taken you into his own family, and identified your interest with the interests

of his kingdom. Were it possible for the adversary to pluck you out of the Redeemer's hands, he would gain a victory which would kindle a smile of malignant exultation on the countenance of every fiend in hell; for he would have succeeded in overturning the whole fabric of Christ's mediation, and in rolling a torrent of desolation through all the dominions of Jehovah.

3. The believer, in consequence of the mediation of Christ, gains a triumph over DEATH.

I am not here going to dispute the fact, that death is a relentless and terrible enemy: and if any one is so intrenched in the carelessness of a worldly mind, or the hardihood of philosophical unbelief, as to question this fact, I would bid him correct his error, by a visit to that bed-side, where the conflict with this enemy is actually going forward. Let him go, at that awful moment, when the distance between time and eternity is contracted to a point; when the objects of the two worlds meet and mingle in the twilight of life. Let him watch the fading expression of that sinking eye; and wipe the cold damps of death from that pale and fallen cheek; and listen to that awful groan, which is the signal of a departing spirit. Let him count the fluttering pulse, till he can count no longer; and then let him gaze upon that crazy, dissolving tabernacle, and think that the soul is gone! If he be not a monster, instead of a man, he is now cured of his insensibility to the terrors of death. Laugh at the approach of this king of terrors, if you will,—but let not human nature stand charged with the awful outrage: rather confess that you have put off the character of a man, and put on that of a fiend.

But notwithstanding death is, in itself, an event so terrible, so appalling to the courage of the stoutest heart, charge me not with inconsistency, if I say that the Christian may reasonably rise above its terrors. I do not mean that nature, even in the Christian, will not pay her tribute of dread to this formidable enemy; and doubtless there are cases, in which, for wise purposes, a full share of religious consolation is not granted, while in the immediate conflict. But I mean that every believer in Jesus has a just and legitimate ground for triumph. I mean, Christians, that He whom you adore as your Redeemer and your Head, has been down into the dark dominions of Death, and encountered the

monster, and taken away his sting; and that in virtue of your union to Him, you have a share in the benefits of this glorious victory. Avoid passing through the dark valley, you cannot: it is the only passage from this world to heaven: But even there, where nothing but gloom thickens upon the sinner,—where no sounds but those of vengeance, strike upon his ear,—you may walk in the light of the Divine countenance, and be charmed by the music of attending angels. The grave may seem to you a cold and dark habitation; but as sure as Jesus has risen, the iron-bands which confine you there, will ere long break; and that mouldering body will come forth in purity and splendour, to constitute a part of your Redeemer's triumph.

4. I will only add, fourthly, that the triumph of the Christian, in virtue of the mediation of Christ, extends to ALL THE POWERS OF DARKNESS: Even with respect to hell itself, and all the enemies which it embosoms, he may ask in the language of triumph, *Who is he that condemneth?*

If there be any ground for a final triumph of those malignant spirits over the Christian, it must be, either because his admission to heaven would involve a reflection upon the justice of God, or because his character would be offensive to Infinite Holiness. But neither of these is the fact. The atonement of Christ which was made on his behalf, and in which he trusts, has satisfied every claim which justice could urge: the Spirit of Christ in his sanctifying operations, ultimately removes every vestige of pollution; and the intercession of Christ is ever prevalent for his perseverance in the way to heaven. If then, the powers of darkness ever gain possession of his soul, (with reverence be it spoken,) it must prove the redeeming blood and renewing grace of Christ to be inefficacious; and he must finally have an opposite destination from that for which all Heaven has been interested to prepare him. Here, Christian, is the crowning part of your victory. And remember, that your Redeemer's mediation not only shuts the door of hell,—but it opens the gate of heaven. You are not only delivered from the power of every enemy, but you are put in possession of a glorious inheritance. All things are yours. Justly, therefore, may you exclaim under the pressure of affliction, in your conflict with yourself, amid the agonies of death, and when your immortal soul, escaping the vigilance of malignant spirits, passes the threshold of the world of glory,—justly may you exclaim,—*Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ*

that died; yea, rather, that is risen again; who is even at the right hand of God; who also maketh intercession for us.

On a review of this subject, we learn, first, what constitutes the *distinctive character*, and the *essential glory* of the gospel.

All the false systems of religion which have existed in the world, whether they have been professedly opposed to the Bible, or professedly drawn from it—have entirely mistaken the exigencies of human nature, and of course, have utterly failed in their attempts to provide for them. They have laid "the flattering unction" to human pride, by denying the existence of any deep moral disorder in the heart, and the necessity of any supernatural remedy. And when reason and conscience have, for a season, prevailed, and given the lie to this view of man's character and condition, and waked up the gloomy apprehensions of nature in the sinner's bosom; Oh, how has he listened in vain for some voice which should speak to him in accents of forgiveness! But no such deceitful dealing is chargeable upon the Gospel. In distinction from every other system of religion, it reveals to man the naked exigencies of his condition, and speaks plainly to him of the terrors of the wrath of God. And having dealt thus honestly, it proceeds to disclose to him the mediation of Jesus Christ; in virtue of which, it bids him rise up from the bed of spiritual death, and walk abroad in all the peace, and joy, and dignity of an heir of heaven. Here, then, I repeat it, is the distinctive feature of Christianity; and every system of religion in which this feature is not found—whatever else it may be—is not *Gospel*. It may assume the name, and claim the honour; but with that which constitutes its life and power, it has no communion.

And as the mediation of Christ constitutes the leading characteristic of the Gospel, so also it imparts to it its *chief glory*. Admit that Jesus Christ died as an atoning sacrifice, and rose as the first fruits of them that slept, and that he now lives in heaven as a prevailing Intercessor; in other words, admit the scriptural view of his mediation, and I see enough in the gospel to justify all the interest which it has excited, whether on earth or in heaven. I wonder not that the sinner, burdened with pollution, and harrowed with guilt, betakes himself to it as his last and only refuge. I am not surprised that he upon whom this world's

misfortunes thicken, should press the gospel to his bosom, and find a stream of living consolation pouring in upon his desolate heart. I am at no loss to account for the fact, that the gospel exerts such a sustaining influence in the valley of death; that the falling of the earthly tabernacle is so often attended by a shout of victory over the king of terrors. And when I open the volume of inspiration, I am not surprised to find how much the gospel awakens the interest, and engages the scrutiny of angels; or in what strains of admiration and ecstacy, its praises are celebrated by all the inhabitants of heaven. But if you blot out this bright feature of Christianity, or if, while you call Christ, Mediator, you virtually disown him in that character, by denying the atoning efficacy of his death, I know not what there is left in the gospel, to meet the necessities of the wretched on earth, or to justify the acclamations of the redeemed in heaven. If I really believed that Jesus Christ was only a *teacher*, I should feel that it were but mockery to the miseries of a fellow mortal, if I were to direct him to the gospel for consolation; and though he were to sit down and weep his life away in an agony of despair, I should still be obliged, in justice to my own convictions, to tell him that here is no refuge for the guilty.

2. We learn from this subject, *the dignity of the Christian character*.

This is the grand distinction in comparison with which every other fades into insignificance. You may be rich in this world's goods; but wealth is perishable, and in one hour of unsuccessful enterprise, your property may all be given to the winds. You may be loaded with this world's honours; but human applause is capricious and uncertain; and what will become of the laurels of earthly greatness, when your head is laid in the dust? But the dignity of the Christian depends on none of these frivolous and artificial distinctions. It depends on nothing short of his union to the Son of God; an union which is formed by the influence of the Holy Spirit, and which secures to him an interest in the incorruptible glories of Christ's mediation. He belongs to that redeemed family, which is to act so distinguished a part on the theatre of heaven; and the ages of eternity will only contribute to brighten his crown, and to enhance for ever the glory of his exaltation.

But how different, how very different is the opinion, which is formed of the Christian, by the children of the world. By some, he is regard-

ed as a miserable enthusiast; by others, as buried in austerity and gloom. His noble birth, his distinguished friends, his high destination, are all overlooked or forgotten. But, take heed, ye who pride yourselves upon the distinctions of life, lest the day should come, when *he* will appear in triumph, and *you* in dishonour. In that cottage, where poverty and distress reside, and which you might think yourself dishonoured to enter, there lives a candidate for all the honours of the New Jerusalem. There is the joy of contentment even now; and in the hour of death, there will be the triumph of faith; and after that, there will be an exceeding and eternal weight of glory. *You* may despise him, and shrink from his society, but *angels* will rejoice in it. Jesus the Mediator will own him as one of his ransomed people, and place upon his head a crown of life. But to what honour can you look forward, who build all your hopes upon the world? To the honour of a name which will perish, as soon as your body is hidden in the tomb: to the honour of a decorated coffin, a splendid funeral, a towering monument—it may be, a lying epitaph—which will tell the passing stranger of virtues which were never yours. And is this all? Teach us, Great God, the meanness of worldly glory, and help us to aspire to the exalted dignity of the Christian!

3. The subject teaches the Christian a lesson of *humility*.

Who art thou, disciple of Christ, that thou shouldst be an heir to such a glorious inheritance? What hast thou done to entitle thee to the high privileges of a child of God? Thou art a creature of yesterday—a worm of the dust; and till lately thou wert a child of wrath, and a rebel against Jehovah. And such thou wouldst always have been, had it not been for the power of redeeming grace. Yes, Christian, He who *brought* you *up out of the horrible pit* and *miry clay, and set* your *feet upon a rock, and established* your *goings, and hath put a new song in* your *mouth*, and hath sustained and shielded you ever since by the arm of his power,—He is your covenant God and Redeemer. Wherefore, when you praise *Him*, forget not to abase *yourself*. When you have the brightest view of the riches of divine grace in your redemption; when faith mounts up nearest to the Redeemer's throne, and dwells with most intense delight upon his glories, and anticipates, with firmest assurance, a residence in his kingdom—then does it become you to bend with deepest humility in token of your unworthiness; and if you ever mingle your voice with the voices of the redeemed, you will

not more certainly ascribe *blessing, and honour, and thanksgiving to the Lamb that was slain*, than you will add, *Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name, O Lord, be all the glory.*

Finally: The subject impressively teaches us the *guilt of unbelief*.

It is unbelief which rejects the gospel; and the guilt of it is proportioned to the excellence and glory of the gospel. But the gospel is supremely excellent and glorious: it is the brightest revelation of the character and purposes of God, which, so far as we know, has ever been made to the universe. Unbelief, therefore, must involve aggravated guilt, and lead to a fearful condemnation. But you say, perhaps, that you are not an unbeliever, as you neither deny the divinity of revelation, or have aught to say against its doctrines. Fellow mortal, be not deceived. Believe me, there is a *practical* unbelief, which as really pours contempt upon the mediation of Christ, as the most boldly avowed infidelity. If it has more of the external appearance of religion, it is more at war with consistency; for while it *acknowledges* the truth and importance of the gospel, it *acts* as though this gospel were neither true nor important. And I will tell you the marks of this unbelief, that you may know how to detect its operations; for it is insidious and deceitful; and has no doubt conducted multitudes to perdition, who had never doubted that they were on the way to glory. If, then, you do not love the commandments of God, and cordially approve of his character; if you shrink from that self-denial which the gospel requires, and give yourself up to the control of sinful passions; or if you are satisfied with a decent exterior, and feel no concern for the inner man of the heart; or if you are sunk down into a state of stupidity, and worldly-mindedness, and forgetfulness of God, and neglect of prayer—then you have the most alarming symptoms of an evil heart of unbelief. Let no one think that the omniscient eye will not penetrate the thin disguise of merely a correct creed, or a credible profession. That eye will search to the very bottom of the heart; and will dart lightning into every soul that puts on the exterior of a Christian, and yet does not cordially embrace the Saviour. Beware, then, of the spirit of unbelief. However little it may be regarded by the world, or however deep it may lie buried in the heart, it contains the elements of a tremendous curse; for He whose decisions are irreversible, hath declared, *He that believeth not shall be damned.*

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Go....Teach all Nations....*Mat.* xxviii, 19.

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SERMONS VIII. & IX.

By SAMUEL MILLER, D. D.

PRINCETON, NEW-JERSEY.

THE EVIDENCE AND DUTY OF BEING ON THE LORD'S SIDE.

EXODUS, XXXII. 26.

Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the Lord's side?

WHEN this solemn question was asked, the camp of Israel was in a very awful situation. *Moses* had been in the Mount, conversing with God, and receiving the Law from His lips forty days and forty nights. *And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the Mount they gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.* O what an amazing scene was here! That the very people who, a few weeks before, had witnessed the wonderful displays of Divine power on their behalf, in *Egypt* and at the *Red Sea;* and afterwards the still more terrifick wonders of Mount *Sinai*, when *the thunderings, and lightnings, and voices and earthquake* made the whole camp to tremble, and even *Moses*, familiar as he was with God, *exceedingly to fear and quake;*—that this very people should so soon have forgotten all their signal deliverances, and all their solemn vows, and begged to be placed under the guidance of a dumb idol,—presents an example of infatuation and depravity as enormous as it was degrading. But so it was. The request was made. And, still more astonishing to

tell! *Aaron* complied with it. Under his direction, the people, in their idolatrous phrenzy, made a Golden Calf, and fell down before it, and worshipped it, and cried out, *These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.*

When *Moses* was informed of this besotted folly and wickedness on the part of the people, he immediately *turned and went down from the Mount*, and *Joshua* with him; and after remonstrating with *Aaron* and with the people on account of their sin, *he took the Calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strewed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it.* Having done this,—for the purpose of making a solemn discrimination between the innocent and the guilty, and of preparing to execute the judgment of God against the latter,—he came forth and *stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the Lord's side?*

The spirit of this question, my friends, is just as applicable to us, as it was to the people of *Israel* three and thirty centuries ago. Suppose the Saviour were now to come, in his glorified body, into this assembly, and, standing visibly in the midst of us, were to ask—*Who is on the Lord's side?* what answer would each of us give Him? What answer would candour *compel* us to give? Well, that Divine and Omniscient Redeemer *is* present with us, though our bodily eyes see Him not; and he *does* ask each of us, in his Word, and in his Providence, this solemn question. Let me, then, beseech every one to answer it to his own conscience as in the presence of Him *who cannot be deceived, and will not be mocked.* And that you may be enabled to answer it with the more intelligence and certainty, I shall endeavour, *First*, to DESCRIBE THE CHARACTER OF THOSE WHO ARE ON THE LORD'S SIDE; and *Secondly*, to ASSIGN SOME REASONS WHY WE ARE ALL BOUND TO BE ON THAT SIDE. In other words, I propose to speak of the EVIDENCE and the DUTY of being on *the Lord's side.*

I. The first question to be considered is, What is implied in being *on the Lord's side?* What is the character of those of whom this may be said?

Now, this question evidently presupposes that there *is* a SIDE which may be emphatically called *the Lord's side.* And can any thinking man contemplate our world, or look into the Bible, without seeing and feeling that this is really the case? There is a controversy between God and rebellious man. God is on the side of truth, order, and holiness. The rebels are on the side of folly, disorder, and sin. They have risen up, without the least cause, in opposition to the rightful

Sovereign of the universe; and their hostility to him is implacable. They dislike his character, his truth, his precepts, his government, although all are infinitely perfect. This warfare, so unreasonable and atrocious on man's part, has been raging for near six thousand years, and is still kept up with unabated enmity. The object of Jehovah is most wise and benevolent. It is to maintain untarnished the glory of his perfections, the honour of his law, and the authority of his most perfect and blessed government; and to make such a display of all these to his intelligent and moral kingdom, as shall ultimately promote the greatest happiness of that kingdom. By *the Lord's side*, therefore, is obviously meant, the side of wisdom, of holinesss, and of true enjoyment; the side which our blessed Saviour came down from heaven, and made himself an atoning sacrifice to promote and maintain; the side, of course, which all good beings, on earth and in heaven, espouse and love; and which nothing but infatuation and wickedness ever prompted any creature to oppose.

The question before us further presupposes, that there are those who are *not* on *the Lord's side*. The very terms of it, as asked by *Moses*, plainly imported that the men of that generation were not *all* on the right side. Far from it. They were greatly divided. We know not what proportion, but a large number, were in the ranks of rebellion. So it was then; so it has ever been, since the time of *Cain* and *Abel*; and so it is now. The great mass of mankind are in arms against the righteous Governour of the universe. This is the case, indeed, by nature, with ALL. But some, blessed be the riches of Jehovah's grace, have laid down the weapons of their hostility, have left the camp of the rebels, and come in, and accepted the offers of reconciliation. Now, to one or the other of these parties all mankind belong. Yes, my brethren, those who have penitently returned and submitted, and those who still stand out in their rebellion—God and mammon—divide the population of our globe between them. We cannot say of any individual of our race that he belongs to neither of these parties. Our blessed Saviour has unquestionably decided this point, when he pronounces, with solemn emphasis, *He that is not for me, is against me.* Let none, then, flatter themselves that, although they have no positive evidence that they are *on the Lord's side*, they may yet take comfort in the hope that they are not on the side of the enemy. This is a miserable delusion. There can be no neutrality here. If you are not *on the Lord's side*, you are on the *side* of his arch-adversary; and, remaining such, must be treated accordingly.

Once more; the question before us presupposes, that it is of the utmost importance that the point which it presses, be decided. *Moses*, undoubtedly believed, that interests of unspeakable consequence were involved in the solemn interrogatory *then;* and are interests of less consequence, think you, involved in it *at present?* Can any rational being doubt that the solution of the question, whether we are the friends or the enemies of God, is of infinite moment? Oh, no. If ever a question embraced OUR ALL, this is that question. Nay, it not only ought to be decided, but it ought to be decided *now;* without the delay of another hour; before we take one more step in the journey of life. Eternal interests are at stake, which must remain in the deepest uncertainty and jeopardy, so long is this point is undetermined. Rational and accountable creature! hastening to the judgment-seat of Christ,—let me beseech you to apply yourself without sophistry, and without evasion to this all important inquiry.

The question then recurs—What is implied in being *on the Lord's side?* I answer,

1. They alone are *on the Lord's side*, who are ON THE SIDE OF HIS TRUTH; who believe and embrace the fundamental *doctrines* of his Word. It can, by no means, my friends—whatever some may insinuate to the contrary—it can by no means be considered a matter of small moment, what your doctrinal belief on the great subject of religion may be. If all holy practice be founded on holy principle; if the incorruptible seed of all holy principle be truth; if men, as our blessed Lord expressly declares, are *sanctified by the truth;* if those who receive or teach *another gospel*, that is, a gospel essentially different from that which is contained in the Bible, are to be held "*accursed*," as the inspired apostle pronounces; in a word, if there be "*heresies*" which are "*damnable*," as another apostle expressly declares;—then we are demonstrably led to the conclusion—that to be *on the Lord's side*, is to be on the side of its fundamental truth; and that those who reject this, cannot be the cordial friends of him who is the Author and Teacher of truth.

We are by no means, indeed, to suppose, that *every degree* of doctrinal error is an evidence of enmity to God. If this were the case, probably no man living would be found *on the Lord's side;* because no man, it is probable, is absolutely perfect in his *creed*, any more than in his *practice*. Yet, on the other hand, there are limits beyond which doctrinal error is manifestly incompatible with genuine piety. How *much* error a man must embrace before it becomes evident that he is not a

Christian, is not for a fallible mortal to decide. Yet when we have ascertained what the *fundamental*, the absolutely *essential* doctrines of the Gospel are—and to ascertain these, will not be very difficult to those who have the Bible in their hands—we are, of course, perfectly warranted in pronouncing, that those who reject them, are not *on the Lord's side*. They reject that without which no man can be said to receive the Gospel, and consequently, without which no man is a Christian.

2. They only are *on the Lord's side*, who are ON THE SIDE OF HIS CHARACTER, who love him supremely, on account of his infinite excellence, and who rejoice in all his adorable perfections.

All will allow, without hesitation, that those Israelites who turned away from the true God, and gave their worship to a miserable idol, were not on the side of Jehovah. So *Moses*, under Divine guidance, decided concerning all such persons; and therefore, inflicted upon them a penalty as ignominious as it was terrible. But there are many other idols besides those of gold and silver, stone and wood. An idol is any thing which usurps the place of God in the hearts of his rational creatures. Accordingly the inspired Apostle expressly declares that *covetousness is idolatry*. And so is inordinate love to any created object. That individual, then, whoever he may be; however externally fair and blameless his deportment; however confident his profession; who places his highest affections on any thing in this world; whether it be wealth; or honours; or relatives; or pleasures; or splendid living,—makes it as perfectly manifest that he is not a friend of God, as if he bowed down, every day of his life, to a graven image. *Whosoever*, says an inspired Apostle, *will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God. Ye cannot*, says the Saviour, *serve God and mammon.* And again, *He that loveth father or mother, wife or children, brethren or sisters, more than me, is not worthy of me: he cannot be my disciple.*

He, then, who is *on the Lord's side*, not only loves God with supreme affection; but he loves him, primarly, on account of his own infinite and eternal excellence. He cherishes a cordial complacency in all the Divine attributes. He is reconciled to them all, approves them all, takes pleasure in the contemplation of them all. If he could accomplish it by a wish, he would have no perfection of his Maker either laid aside or altered. He rejoices unfeignedly in the unspotted holiness, the inflexible justice, and the terrible majesty of God, as well as in his goodness, mercy, and grace. In other words, he rejoices in the real, scriptural, and complete character of God. He sees a glory in

all that Jehovah is, as well as in all that he does, which inspires delight, confidence and joy. His heart goes forth, too, in habitual gratitude to God, for all the bounty of his Providence, and for all the riches of his grace. He feels himself a debtor to both, beyond the power of language to express. So that he is able, from the heart, to say with the holy Psalmist, *Lord, whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none on earth that I desire beside thee.* But further—

3. They only are *on the Lord's side*, who are ON THE SIDE OF HIS GOSPEL; who have sincerely fallen in with the plan of reconciliation which he has revealed; have come forth from the camp of the enemy, and been *joined to the Lord in one Spirit.* What would you say to a number of individuals, in an army of traitors, who should believe and allege that they were friendly to their government, while they remained associated with its enemies, and co-operated with them in all their plans and measures? Would you not indignantly reject their claim? Would you not say to them—'Come forth from the camp of the rebels; accept of the pardon offered you; and show yourselves loyal citizens, and we will believe you.' So it is with those who are by nature enemies of God. Until they cordially repent of their enmity, and lay down their arms, and accept of the offered terms of reconciliation, and come forth from the ranks of rebellion, and practically manifest their friendship, they must, undoubtedly, be considered as enemies still. Let no one, then, imagine that he is *on the Lord's side*, who is not a friend to the blessed Redeemer; who has not humbly and penitently accepted of him, as the foundation of his hope, and the life of his soul; who has not cordially embraced his humbling and self denying terms of mercy. Hence, *repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ*, are represented in Scripture as the very first steps in Gospel obedience. And the benign proclamation of that Gospel is, *He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life. There is now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

This acceptance of the Saviour, as was intimated, is always connected with *coming out from the camp of the enemy*, and *showing, by our spirit and pursuits, that we belong to Christ.* To be *on the Lord's side*, does not, indeed, imply withdrawing from society, and indulging in the moroseness and gloom of monastick seclusion. The religion of Jesus Christ is a social, benevolent religion. It requires those who profess to obey it, to *shine as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation;* and to endeavour, by an amiable, pure and heavenly con-

versation, to win all around them to the service of their Master. When, therefore, they are exhorted and profess to *come out from the world*, the meaning is, that they are no longer *conformed to the world;* that they have separated themselves from the maxims, the follies, and the criminal habits of the world; that they have no *fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather*, by their conduct, habitually *reprove them;* that they withdraw, not only from every form of open corruption, but also from many of the more decent forms of recreation and social indulgence, which the world allow, and pronounce innocent; but which all experience shows to be unfriendly to a life of communion with God. They *confess Christ before men*, not merely by going, at stated seasons, to a sacramental table, but also by daily manifesting the power of his religion in their spirit and conversation. In short, they live, in some measure, as those who are habitually *seeking a better country, that is an heavenly;* whose treasure is in heaven, whose hearts are there also, and who are daily ascending thither in holy contemplation and spiritual desires. Believe it, my friends, if you would really be *on the Lord's side*, you must decisively take your stand, practically, as well as in words, with those who are represented as a *chosen generation, a peculiar people.* Hence, the solemn address of heaven's King is—*Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.*

4. Again; they alone can justly be said to be *on the Lord's side*, who are ON THE SIDE OF HIS LAW; who delight in his will, rejoice in his government, and strive to obey him in all things.

This is what the inspired Apostle emphatically calls, *loving not in word only, but in deed and in truth.* And, accordingly, the Saviour himself declares, *Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.* And again, *He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.* And, in accordance with the Saviour's words, *John*, the *beloved disciple*, with awful solemnity pronounces—*He that saith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.* Holy obedience, my friends, enters essentially into the character of the Christian. Our blessed Saviour did *not come to destroy the law, but to fulfil it.* He did not come to purchase for his followers a license to sin; but to purchase for them a deliverance from the dominion, as well as the guilt of sin. Hence, the genuine, scriptural evidence that you are *on the Lord's side*, is exactly proportioned

to the evidence of your SANCTIFICATION. Accordingly, the followers of Christ are represented in scripture as *saints*, that is, *sanctified ones*; they are said to be *chosen in Christ, that they might be holy and without blame before him in love.* Nay, the real friend of Christ, not only *aims* and *endeavours* to obey him, but he also *loves* to obey him. He *delights in his law after the inward man.* It is his *meat and drink* to obey the will of his beloved Saviour. His obedience is not merely external, but real and cordial; not partial, but universal; not temporary, merely, but persevering. No mere man, indeed, in this life, ever did, or ever will perfectly obey the divine law. *If any man say that he hath no sin, he deceives himself, and the truth is not in him.* But he of whom we speak *desires* perfection, *breathes* after perfection, and is daily *humbled* and *grieved* that he falls short of it. Whatever God has appointed or commanded, he who is *on the Lord's side*, so far as he is acquainted with it, is disposed to respect and honour. The sabbath of the Lord, he feels bound to venerate and to sanctify. The sanctuary, and all its ordinances he loves, and delights to attend. He regards prayer as a privilege as well as a duty. In short, whatever imperfection may actually attend his obedience—and this imperfection is acknowledged by none more readily, and lamented by none more deeply, than by himself; he does not allow himself to neglect or slight any thing that God has ordained; but desires and strives to *walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.*

5. Lastly; they alone are *on the Lord's side*, who are ON THE SIDE OF HIS HONOUR; who habitually and supremely seek his glory. As Jehovah made all things for his own glory; as this is the ultimate end which he himself has in view in all his dispensations both of Providence and of grace; so he commands all his creatures to make it *their* highest object. And all the children of his grace, in some good measure, do this. They heartily espouse the cause of God, and take a deep and tender interest in it as their own. Their aim, and in some degree their attainment, is to hold all other interests in subordination to this. They do not, indeed, neglect their worldly affairs. Nay, commonly, they are more diligent, systematick, and orderly in their temporal business, than most others. But still *they seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.* The spread of the Gospel; the revival of religion; the prosperity of Zion; the salvation of souls; the honour of the Redeemer—these are the objects which above all others they esteem and seek. They are grieved when the Saviour is dishonoured. They mourn,

from the heart, over all the error, the profaneness, and the profligacy which they witness around them. And while they turn away with abhorrence from every thing, either in principle or practice dishonouring to God; it is their meat and drink to exalt the name of God; to honour his institutions; to benefit his people; to extend the knowledge of his religion; to instruct the ignorant; to reclaim the vicious; to assist in sending the Gospel to the dark places of the earth; and, in a word, over all the lurking places of ignorance, and sin, and misery, to assist in shedding the rays of knowledge, faith, love, joy, and happiness. These are the favourite objects of all who are *on the Lord's side.* For these they labour, and plan, and contribute, and pray. And into the blessed scale of these interests, they delight to cast the whole weight of their desires, their exertions, and their example from day to day.

Such are they who are *on the Lord's side.* Here, then, my friends, before we proceed to the second head of discourse, which will be reserved for another opportunity—let us make a solemn pause, and inquire, whether *we* have *any part or lot* in the character which has been described. You will perceive that, in delineating this character, I have not dwelt on the peculiarities of any particular denomination of christians; but upon those great principles of our common christianity, which all the friends of evangelical truth concur in maintaining. How stands this great concern, then, my beloved hearers, with regard to each of *you?* Are you *on the Lord's side,* or are you leagued with his enemies? The testimony by which this question is to be decided, is not remote or obscure; but plain, simple, and at hand. Let me beseech you to review with impartiality the marks of friendship to God which have been laid down. Do you take the part of Jehovah's truth against *hereticks,* and *hold* fast the fundamental doctrines of his Word? Do you supremely love his character and service, preferring them above those of any other master? Do you *delight in his law after the inward man,* and unfeignedly mourn over all your known departures from it? Have you, with penitence and faith, renounced your rebellion, come forth from its ranks, and submitted to the Saviour as the *Lord your righteousness, and the Lord your strength?* Is sin your grief and burden, and is it your habitual governing desire to be delivered from its pollution, as well as its guilt, and to obey the will of Christ in all things? Is the honour of the Redeemer dear to your hearts, and the extension and glory of his kingdom *preferred above your chief joy?* If you can, in the fear of God, answer these questions in the affirmative, you are *on the Lord's side;* and have a right to the privileges and comforts of this

relation. But if not, you are still aliens and enemies. Fellow mortals! can you conceive of an inquiry more momentous than this? Can you consent that it should remain for one hour undecided? Or, if compelled in candour to decide it *against yourselves*,—can you remain a moment at ease? Remember that there is a solemn trial just before you. You may turn away from this inquiry *now*; but you cannot evade it long. And, Oh, when the decision comes, where will you then be? On the right hand or on the left? Great Searcher of hearts! thou knowest! *O search us, and try us, and lead us in the way everlasting!*

SERMON IX.

EXODUS, XXXII. 26.—*Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the Lord's side?*

HAVING endeavoured, with the utmost plainness, to show what is implied in being *on the Lord's side*, I come now,

II. TO OFFER SOME REASONS WHY WE OUGHT, ALL OF US, TO BE ON THE LORD'S SIDE.

But can it be necessary to *reason* on such a subject? Yes, my friends, it *is* necessary. Impenitent men are so infatuated, so completely beside themselves, in a spiritual sense, that they need all the entreaty and expostulation which we can employ for their benefit. Accordingly, Jehovah himself condescends to *reason* with his rebellious creatures, and to *beseech* them to be reconciled to him. *Come now*, saith He, by the Prophet, *and let us* REASON *together*.

1. The first reason which I shall offer why we ought all to be *on the Lord's side*, is, that IT IS THE SIDE OF TRUTH AND RIGHTEOUSNESS. It is, emphatically THE RIGHT SIDE. In espousing the side of any individual or party, in a worldly controversy, we are always in some danger of being betrayed into error, or, at least, into excess. For, as no man is perfect, so almost every cause or party to which we can attach ourselves in the present life, has some mixture of imperfection, which a wise man sees and regrets, and which he dares not, as a conscientious man, advocate throughout. But in the case before us, we are in no such danger. The cause of God is infinitely wise and righteous, without the possibility of mistake or injustice. In the great controversy existing between Him and rebellious man, God is wholly in the right, and man altogether in the wrong. God is a holy, wise, and equitable Sovereign:

while man is an unreasonable, perverse, and infatuated rebel. God requires nothing of the rebel, but that which he ought, upon every principle, immediately to perform. While the disobedient creature, himself being judge, is constantly pursuing a course as irrational as it is criminal. It is evident, then, that all who take the side of God in this controversy, take the right side; the side which is holy and just, and good, in an infinite degree. I appeal to you, then, my friends, whether we are not all solemnly bound to be on this side? Is not being on this side the most reasonable, and in every respect the most worthy of our rational nature? Is it not the side of all that is excellent, and blessed, and benevolent, and heavenly, against all that is criminal, and degrading, and destructive in the creation of God.

2. Again; as another reason why you ought to be *on the Lord's side*, let me beseech you to consider seriously ON WHAT SIDE YOU ARE, IF YOU ARE NOT ON HIS. If you are not on the side of God, you are on the opposite, hostile side. It is impossible, as was before said, to stand neuter in this controversy. You *must*—you assuredly *do* side with the one or the other; the kingdom of light, or the kingdom of darkness; God or mammon; Christ or Belial. There is no other alternative. If you only *decline* to take the Lord's side, that is enough to condemn you. That itself is taking side *against* him. Only "forget" Him, and his word declares that you will be regarded and treated as traitors against his government. It is painful to say it; but as long as you do not heartily take *the Lord's side*, it is a solemn truth, that you are "in league with death, and in covenant with hell." You are "enlisted under the banner of the prince of darkness, and acting in concert with the devil and his angels." My dear hearers, who yet remain aliens from *the covenant of promise*, can you think of this, and not tremble? Can you recollect without horror, that, as long as you remain in this situation, whether you go out, or come in; whether you sit down or rise up; wherever you go, or whatever you do, you are joining with the enemies of the God that made you; are taking the side of rebellion against that government which is the only hope of the intelligent creation? Creature of God! dying, yet immortal! I ask again, canst thou think of this without deep alarm? Canst thou think of standing in direct hostility with infinite Wisdom, infinite Power, and infinite Benevolence? Art thou willing to be found in league with all that is evil, and at war with all that is good in the universe? If God be against thee, who can be for thee? *Canst thou contend with him? Canst thou thunder with a voice like Him? Woe to him that striveth with his Maker?*

3. Consider further, as another reason why you ought to be *on the Lord's side*, HOW MUCH THE LORD HAS DONE FOR YOU. Consider how often he has been your Helper, your Protector, and your Benefactor; how often he has appeared for your deliverance, and how rich have been the bounties of his Providence. To this heavenly Sovereign are every one of you indebted for your existence; for all your faculties; for the distinguished rank which you hold in the scale of being. To Him are you indebted for every breath you draw, for every moment

you live, for every comfort you have ever enjoyed, for every valuable acquirement you have made, for every hope you are permitted to cherish. To Him are you indebted, above all, for the gift of a Saviour; for the gracious offer of peace, and pardon, and sanctification, and eternal life and glory by his atoning sacrifice; for the gift of the Holy Spirit to strive with you; and for all your precious privileges, temporal and spiritual. And will you hesitate—can you doubt, whether to be on the side of this Benefactor or not? Can you consent to remain another hour in hostility against your Maker, your Protector, the bountiful Author of all your mercies? Forbid it gratitude! Forbid it every rational generous principle of our nature!

4. A fourth reason, why we ought all to be *on the Lord's side*, is, that IT IS THE SIDE OF HAPPINESS; the only side which can effectually secure our real enjoyment. I am aware that multitudes make a very different estimate of this matter. They think piety one of the greatest foes to personal enjoyment; and, therefore, they deliberately postpone all serious attention to the subject, to some future period—perhaps to old age, that they may, in the mean time, enjoy life. Just as reasonably might a man, labouring under a loathsome and painful disease, decline or postpone being healed, lest recovering his health might interfere with his comfort. O the amazing, the almost incredible infatuation of men! Never did creatures calling themselves rational, yield to a more degrading and miserable delusion! The fact is directly the reverse of what an impenitent and unbelieving world suppose. *There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked. The way of transgressors is hard. But the path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more to the perfect day.* Reconciliation and friendship with God, really form the basis of all rational and true enjoyment. The graces and duties of the christian life, are not only consistent with happiness, but will be found, when examined, to form THE VERY ESSENCE OF IT. What are faith, and hope, and love, and joy, and trust in God, and resignation, and contentment, and all *the fruits of the Spirit*—but another name for the truest felicity of which man is capable here below? Yes, brethren, just in proportion as we *walk with God*, we bring down heaven into our souls. *Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. The way of righteousness is peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever. Happy the people that are in such a case; yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord!*

5. Further; let me entreat those who are not yet *on the Lord's side*, to consider that THEY HAVE NOT ONE REASONABLE PLEA FOR BEING ON THE SIDE OF SATAN. I know, indeed, that the children of this world frequently offer excuses for the course they take, which may appear to them plausible, and in which they entrench themselves with great apparent confidence. But they are all delusive; most of them impious insults to the God of heaven; and such as they would be ashamed of offering in reference to their temporal affairs. Do you say, my impenitent hearer, that you are *unable* to quit the side of sin and Satan, and to join that of the Lord? There never was a more deceitful or hol-

low-hearted plea. You labour under no other inability in this case, than that which arises from your depravity, your criminal disaffection to your rightful sovereign. It is just as if a thief, or a murderer, arrayed before a human tribunal, should plead as an apology for his crime, that his love of the wicked act was so deeply inwrought and fixed in his nature, that he could not but indulge it, and must, therefore, be excused! How would a righteous judge treat such a shameless plea? Again; do you say, that the service of God is oppressive, or injurious to your interest? Never was there a more groundless cavil. He never was a hard Master. He requires nothing of us but what is as much adapted to promote our welfare as his own glory. All Scripture and all experience demonstrate, that *his commandments are not grievous:* and that *his service*, instead of slavery, *is perfect freedom*,—the noblest freedom. Do you plead, that the provisions of the Gospel are not extensive and rich enough to reach your case? This objection is no less false than the foregoing. The blessed Redeemer is both able and willing to *save to the uttermost*, all that come to God through Him. To whatever embarrassments our philosophical speculations concerning the extent of the atonement may give rise, the plain language of Him who shed his blood for sinners, is, *Look unto me, and be ye saved*, ALL THE ENDS OF THE EARTH, *for I am God, and beside me there is none else.* And again, *Come unto me, all ye who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest: for whosoever cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.* And again, WHOSOEVER WILL, *let him come, and take of the water of life freely.* Do you allege that you have not time to attend to this great subject? Just as well might you allege a want of time to take the aliment necessary for sustaining your nature. Without the latter, indeed, your natural lives cannot be supported; but without the former, better had you never been born; for your spirits must die eternally. O, for what was time given you? Can it be devoted to any object comparable to that of preparing for endless blessedness? Seeing, then, that you are *altogether without excuse;* seeing you have no reasonable plea for declining, or delaying to join the Lord's side, let me beseech you now to accept of his gracious invitation. *To-day, while it is called to-day, harden not your hearts.* Why should you attempt apologies now, when you know that in the great day of trial, you will be speechless?

6. The last reason which I shall urge, why we ought all to be *on the Lord's side*, is, that IT IS THE ONLY SAFE SIDE; THE ONLY SIDE THAT WILL FINALLY AND ASSUREDLY TRIUMPH. *His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion shall endure throughout all generations. He must reign until He shall have put all enemies under his feet.* Yea, my friends, the cause of God is the only one that shall live, and grow, and flourish, when all others have sunk under the arm of his omnipotence. Every thing that is on the side of God, will last, will triumph, will eternally prosper: the perfections of his character, and the stability of his covenant, are pledged for this result. But inevitable downfall and destruction await every person, and every interest belonging to the side of his enemies. *Behold the day cometh that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea and all that do wickedly shall be stubble; and*

the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. For the Lord shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them who know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.

Our subject suggests a variety of practical reflections, to some of which we now request your serious attention. And,

1. We are led by the foregoing remarks to reflect, *How obvious and how strong the obligations on all to make a profession of religion!* By making a profession of religion, we mean, appearing and acting publicly *on the Lord's side.* It is, more particularly, attending with solemnity on those Sacramental Seals which Christ has instituted to mark the line between those who are within, and those who are without the visible Church. The duty of making this profession is obvious. If we are bound to BE *on the Lord's side,* we are surely bound to APPEAR on that side—to be SEEN to be there. Thus the same authority which requires us to believe in Christ, and to love Christ, has commanded us to *confess him before men;* and to let *our light,* as his followers, *shine before men.* Nay, he distinctly gives us to understand, that declining, or neglecting to *confess him before men,* is equivalent to *denying him;* and such he declares, *He will deny before his Father, and before the holy angels.* Nor let any imagine that this obligation to *confess Christ,* is not binding on *them.* Thousands appear to fall into this mistake. They say, and say truly, that to *confess the Saviour,* by making a public profession, while they have no faith in him, no love to him, would be to commit sin: but they appear to have no serious impression whatever, of the dreadful sin of NOT confessing Christ; in other words, of DENYING HIM before men. You are afraid, you say, of the sin of a hypocritical profession; but you are not afraid, it seems, of *turning your backs* upon the Lord of life and glory! O ye who are at ease in the commission of this sin, how great is your guilt! Be not deceived, God is not mocked.

2. How *solemn a transaction is making a profession of religion!* We are under the most solemn obligations, as you have heard, to make a profession—obligations which we can neither renounce nor disregard with impunity. To refuse to do it is to *deny the Saviour.* And yet, we are not at liberty to do it with rashness, with levity, or with an impenitent and unbelieving spirit. O how much does such a profession import! It implies coming forth from the camp of the enemy, and declaring ourselves *on the Lord's side.* It implies *joining ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant, never to be forgotten.* It is a deliberate, public enlisting under the banner of the Captain of salvation; taking, as it were, a solemn oath to be His, in soul and body, for time and eternity. Surely a transaction so serious, so momentous, so irrevocable; a transaction connected with so many important consequences to ourselves and others, is not a mere ceremonial, and ought not to be regarded or treated as such. It ought to be entered upon with intelli-

gence, with solemn deliberation, with the sacred decision of one who remembers that he is *acting for eternity*, and that, after *putting his hand to the plough*, he can *never look back*.

3. *How deplorable the situation of those who are not on the Lord's side!* O that I could give to such persons if it were but one glance of their guilt and danger, as they really are! You are engaged, my friends, in a warfare with Omnipotence. Can you hope to prevail against Him? This is a hope which insanity itself cannot cherish. No; this hostility can end only in one of two ways. Either by your repenting, and abandoning the contest; or by your utter defeat and destruction. Which alternative will you prefer? Will you stand out, defy Jehovah, and brave the heaviest inflictions of his wrath? Surely you cannot deliberately resolve to take so infatuated a course. *Why will you die*, when life is so freely and mercifully offered you? The great Sovereign, against whom you have so unreasonably risen up in arms, is willing to be reconciled. He invites, he beseeches you to come in, and accept of a free pardon. Will you submit and live? You must be at peace with Him, or perish. If you ever intend to make peace with Him, for what are you waiting? Are you expecting *more easy terms* of reconciliation hereafter? Alas! my friends, Jehovah must change before you can be taken to heaven while you continue in love with sin, and enemies of his glorious character. Besides, what *can* be more condescending and gracious than the terms now offered you? You are not called upon to bring a price in your hands. Only lay down your arms, be sorry for what you have done, and become reconciled to the character, the government, and the Gospel of God; and all that is past will be pardoned, and remembered against you no more. Are you waiting for a *more convenient season* to be reconciled? I ask, will continuing longer in your rebellion render it easier for you hereafter to repent and reform? As reasonably might a sick man say to one who offered at once to heal him—"Let me become a little worse; let my disease take a little firmer hold, and my weakness become a little greater, before you apply the remedy." But, ah, you act not thus in reference to the health of your bodies: it is only in regard to the interests of your immortal souls that you yield to such unspeakable infatuation. Do you ask, what you shall do? I answer, *Repent and believe the Gospel.* Take not another step in your present unhallowed course. THIS HOUR lay down the weapons of your rebellion, and be reconciled to Him who alone can avail you as a Friend. I say, THIS HOUR, for you know not that you have another to live. *Now, then, in the day of your merciful visitation*, while the door is open, and the voice of mercy is heard in kindest accents,—enter without delay the sanctuary of salvation, which the Saviour has purchased and prepared by his most precious blood; and you will find peace—eternal peace: but turn away from it, and all will be dark, and miserable, and accursed for ever!

4. Finally; *How important is it that those who profess to be on the Lord's side, exhibit a life and conversation corresponding with their profession.* What would you think, my brethren, if an army raised by the government of your country, and an army formed by a band of traitors,

were encamped in the neighbourhood of each other, and you should see many individuals of the former, while they held their heads high in professions of loyalty, frequently visiting the tented field of the rebels, skulking among their ranks, and in short, by bowing, smiling, and every indication of cordial familiarity, making it difficult, and sometimes impossible, to ascertain to which army they belonged? would you not consider their fidelity extremely suspicious? Need I say, brethren, that there is an awful amount of this equivocal friendship in the visible church? O how many who profess to be *on the Lord's side*, render it most distressingly doubtful, by their daily conformity to the world, whether they really belong to Christ or Belial! Hence it is, that so many who claim to be disciples, go halting and comfortless in their christian profession; oppressed with doubts concerning their own state; strangers to the joyful assurance of hope; and operating as clogs and a burden, rather than helpers to the church. Surely it is time for such to arouse themselves, and to examine with more solicitude than ever ON WHAT SIDE THEY REALLY STAND. O ye who have "subscribed with your hands unto the Lord, and have surnamed yourselves by the name of Israel," remember that the real children of God are *a peculiar people:* peculiar in their experience, their taste, their joys, their habits, and their pursuits. If you wish to have satisfying evidence that you are of their number, enter, with holy decision, into their scriptural peculiarities. If you wish to enjoy peace yourselves, to edify others, or to honour your leader, be decided: *Follow the Lord fully.* Let your every word and action speak on what side you are: not by noisy profession; not by sanctimonious austerity; not by saying in every company, *Stand by, for I am holier than thou;* but by humility, by benevolence, by purity, by self-denial, by a holy elevation of sentiment and affection, by an unaffected taste and zeal for spiritual things, by shunning the very appearance of evil; by abounding in those works of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God. And for your encouragement remember that precious word of promise, from the Captain of salvation, which belongs to every faithful believer—HE THAT CONFESSETH ME BEFORE MEN, HIM WILL I ALSO CONFESS BEFORE MY FATHER AND THE HOLY ANGELS. TO HIM THAT OVERCOMETH, WILL I GRANT TO SIT WITH ME ON MY THRONE, EVEN AS I ALSO OVERCAME, AND AM SET DOWN WITH MY FATHER ON HIS THRONE.—Amen.

THE

NATIONAL PREACHER.

Go—Teach all Nations.—Matt. xxviii. 19.

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SERMON X.

By BAXTER DICKINSON, A. M.

LONG-MEADOW, MASS.

THE DAY OF PENTECOST.

Acts ii. 1.—*And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.* . . . . . .

The Pentecost was an annual religious festival of the Jews, designed to commemorate the promulgation of the law from Mount Sinai. It was instituted fifty days after Israel's deliverance from Egyptian bondage: —a circumstance from which it seems to have derived its name. And it is worthy of notice, that the Pentecost alluded to in the text, was on the Sabbath—fifty days from the resurrection of Christ.

Perhaps few pages of the sacred history can afford the believer either more satisfaction or profit, than the one which exhibits the events of that memorable day.

After glancing at those events, we shall be prepared to contemplate some of the important instruction they afford.

The hundred and twenty disciples were assembled, for prayer and religious conference. And the twelve were doubtless expecting a speedy fulfilment of their Lord's promise,—*that they should be endued with power from on high.* Suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind; and there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, which rested upon each of them. Immediately they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak in languages with which they had previously been unacquainted. These facts being published through Jerusalem, drew around them crowds of astonished hearers. In this multitude were men from at least sixteen different countries or provinces, and of as many different languages or dialects. The disci-

ples addressed the whole, in their varied tongues, on the great subject of salvation.

Some seem to have been satisfied as to the *reality* of the miracle, and yet in doubt as to the *design* of it. And they said one to another; *What meaneth this?* Others, in a spirit of stubborn unbelief and of malice, ridiculed the whole, and pronounced the disciples intoxicated.

But the disciples were not to be silenced by ridicule. In God they felt strong. Peter standing up with the eleven, addressed the multitude with calmness, with plainness, and power. He showed, that the events they now witnessed were in perfect accordance with prophecy; were in fact an exact fulfilment of a prediction of the prophet Joel. He then proceeded to charge upon them the crime of murdering the Son of God; and to bear public testimony to His resurrection, and His exaltation to the right hand of God's throne. *Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain. This Jesus hath God raised up; whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear. Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.*

This plain and bold address, carried to the conscience and heart by an omnipotent Spirit, was overwhelming. The voice of derision was hushed. And on every side broke forth the momentous inquiry, *Men and brethren, what shall we do?* Taught by the Holy Ghost, the apostle urged at once the duty of repentance; and encouraged even the chief of sinners to hope for forgiveness, by a reference to the gracious promises of God. The result was that on that day, three thousand were added to the disciples of the Lord Jesus.

Such was the day of Pentecost; such the triumphant entrance of apostles on the great work of evangelizing the world. We are now,

To CONTEMPLATE SOME OF THE IMPORTANT INSTRUCTION, WHICH THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THAT OCCASION AFFORD.

1. In the occurrences of the day of Pentecost, we discover evidence of A SPECIAL DIVINE INFLUENCE.

The idea is too prevalent, that the agency of the Supreme is only of a general character. It is denied, that he imparts any important influence at one time more than at another. It is supposed, in a word, that the re-

pentance and salvation of sinners are brought about, independently of any *direct* agency on the part of God.

Such views are manifestly at variance with the general testimony of the Bible, and very pointedly discountenanced by the page before us. Through the whole chain of events here detailed, we perceive clear evidence of God's *special* agency. Such evidence is furnished by the fact, that the apostles were instantaneously endued with extraordinary gifts of speech. They spake with other tongues, *as the Spirit gave them utterance.*

Most convincing evidence of a special divine influence is found, also, in the *effects* produced upon the day of Pentecost. Prejudices the most violent were overcome. Hostility to the Christian faith the most rancorous was allayed An important revolution was effected in the character and conduct of three thousand. And the only visible means of producing those astonishing effects, was the plain preaching of the apostles. Independently of divine aid, they spake, too, under very peculiar disadvantages. They had none of the accomplishments of learning, and none of the influence of wealth and rank. They were regarded as a company of unenlightened and deluded adherents to a system of religious heresy. By many they were pitied. By more they were despised. The violence of malignant feeling, which led to the crucifixion of their Lord, had not yet subsided; and they also were in danger of a similar martyrdom. At the same time they inculcated a religion directly at variance with the natural disposition and established prejudices of their hearers.

Contemplating, therefore, the effects produced under such circumstances, we can rationally account for them, only by admitting that the special agency of God was concerned. And those effects, corroborated as they have since been by the experience of millions turned from darkness to light, furnish invincible proof, that there is a secret divine influence sometimes diffused over the soul of man, which gives to the Gospel of truth a convincing and transforming power. An influence it is, with which stands connected the salvation of the rebellious. And it is imparted or withheld according to the sovereign pleasure of Him who governs in the heavens.

2. The occurrences of the day of Pentecost confirmed THE DIVINE MISSION OF JESUS, and THE TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY.

Whilst on earth, the Lord Jesus gave abundant evidence that he was from God. His numerous and well-attested *miracles* were so many unanswerable proofs; that he actually possessed the high character which

he claimed. The *resurrection* of Jesus gave new and still stronger testimony to the divinity of his mission, and the truth of his doctrine.

The unbelieving Jews seemed to regard the event of Christ's *death*, as sufficient evidence that he was an *impostor*. *If thou be the Son of God*, said they, with mingled feelings of incredulity and contempt, *come down from the cross. He saved others, himself he can not save. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him.* And though the fact of his resurrection, according to his own prediction, was established by the clearest testimony, still the leading Jews must pretend, that deception had been practised. They persuaded the multitude, that the disciples came by night and stole him away. It remained for the events of another day, to give testimony to his divine mission, the force of which enmity itself could not resist. Those events were the occurrences of the day of Pentecost. They were an exact and obvious fulfilment of a prediction, or promise, of the Saviour. He encouraged his disciples to expect, that they would be *endued with special power from on high*. They *were* thus endued. Of the fact there was such proof as to convince assembled thousands; and among them the very murderers of their Lord.

If Jesus were an impostor, whence so wonderful a coincidence betwixt his promise and events which took place after his ascension to heaven. We have seen, too, that the peculiar powers possessed by the disciples, and the effects they produced, can be rationally ascribed to nothing short of the special agency of God. And will Jehovah lend his special aid for the support of an impostor, and the propagation of falsehood?

Tell us not, then, that this Jesus, whom we preach, and follow, and trust for immortal life, was a blasphemous pretender, when he *thought it not robbery to be equal with God*. The record of his miracles, the event of his resurrection, and the signal fulfilment of his last promises of love, all demonstrate that he actually possessed that Divine dignity which he claimed. Tell us not, that the Christian system is a base fabrication. The very marked interference of God for its defence on the day of Pentecost assures us, that it is from Himself, and is true. And with such evidence of its divine origin, we will listen to its instructions; we will place entire confidence in its promises; we will cherish its thrilling hopes, as our blessed portion for Eternity.

3. The occurrences of the day of Pentecost exhibit THE FOLLY OF OPPOSITION TO THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST.

We say nothing now concerning the *guilt* of those, who array their talents, learning, influence, and possessions against the cause of God's

Anointed. We say nothing of the *woes*, which will accumulate along the path of their future existence. We see stamped on such opposition a character of *folly*, as well as of crime and peril.

Had the success of the Christian cause, in its commencement, been dependent on the few and feeble disciples of our Lord, its foes might justly have hoped at once to crush it. And were its future success, amid a world in rebellion, dependent exclusively on the resources of either men or angels, we might well despair of its universal triumph, and even indulge the most trembling anticipation. But the cause is supported, and moved on, by an arm of *everlasting strength*.

The day of Pentecost assures us, that Jehovah regards the kingdom of his Son with supreme affection; and that all his perfections are engaged for its defence and enlargement. If otherwise, why at the period of its peculiar trial, did he not abandon it? Why did he grant to its supporters the gift of tongues? Why impart to their ministrations such a resistless energy? The language of this favour to the infant church is too plain to be misunderstood. It gave to her a pledge of unchanging friendship: so that she has nothing to fear from the malice or the power of millions leagued against her. *Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me.*

But if such friendship and power be pledged for Christ's kingdom, we must say, that man never assumes an attitude of greater folly, than when he sets himself to oppose its progress. Let him hush the raging tempest: Let him calm the rocking deep: Let him arrest the sun in his march of grandeur through the heavens: Let him subvert the throne of the Eternal; then will we cease to pity the deluded man, who hopes to injure the kingdom of Immanuel. His warfare is with Omnipotence; and he had better desist from the controversy at once; and like Paul stand forth a champion of the faith he would destroy. He might thus avoid hours, ages, an *eternity*, of mortification, as well as anguish. For Christianity, *in its purity*, must visit every land, province, and village; not merely to learn the condition of mankind; but to establish her empire. She shall achieve one victory after another, over ignorance, prejudice, and corruption; and in one land and province after another, fix her standard, till a voice from heaven shall proclaim, *The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.*

And never has the Christian cause pressed on more swiftly to such a consummation, than at this very moment. Jehovah is most manifestly

coming forth in his strength to build up Zion. Copious showers of heavenly influence are even now descending. Ten thousand streams are contributing to swell that river of God which is to water the whole earth. We can see the empire of Christ fast rising and spreading. To resist the claims of Christianity at such a period, then, under a cloak of infidelity or covetousness, or to think of degrading the Holy One of Israel, can be regarded only as most consummate *folly*.

4. The occurrences of the day of Pentecost exhibit THE GRAND MEANS of advancing the cause of Christ, and saving sinners.

Jehovah has revealed the determination to spread his truth over the earth, and to rescue a countless multitude from spiritual and eternal death. We can not but be aware of his ability to do this, independently of human aid. He can, by his Spirit, enlighten and sanctify the whole world in the twinkling of an eye. He is nevertheless pleased to accomplish his designs of mercy, by the intervention of MEANS. And the grand means he has appointed, as developed on the day of Pentecost, are *the ministrations of the Gospel*. In connexion with these, the triumphs of that day were gained.

It is not doubted, that other means, auxiliary, may be usefully employed. Divine truth, in whatever way presented to the mind, may become the instrument of sanctification. We read instances of the *Sacred Volume* having gone to regions trod by no Christian teacher's foot, and there disclosing the perfections, and urging the claims of Jehovah, with important effect. Often has a *religious Tract* been the commissioned angel of saving mercy. Often has a *sudden death*, a burst of *thunder*, or other providential occurrence, impressed some truth of God with everlasting solemnity on the soul.

Still these means of grace may be only subordinate in importance to the ministrations of God's special appointment. *It pleased God by the foolishness of* PREACHING *to save them that believe.* If Divine influence has in any place distilled, as dew upon Hermon, and the church risen in strength and beauty, it has been in connexion with the appropriate labours of the sacred office. Eighteen centuries ago the Gospel went forth from Jerusalem on an embassy of mingled authority and love. It has traversed the globe. And under its influence the stupid pagan has renounced his foolish rites; the sensualist his scenes of low crime; the proud have been humbled; the desponding cheered; the Saviour has received the homage and confidence of millions; and heaven has obtained steady accessions to the number of its purified and happy population. But where has the Gospel achieved any extended triumphs, ex-

cept as its truths have been explained and urged, by an ambassador for Christ?

Who will doubt the pre-eminent importance of the Christian ministry, as a means of salvation, when he looks at the Divine sanction it received on the day of Pentecost? The ministrations of that day were the first public efforts under the commission, *Preach the Gospel to every creature—beginning at Jerusalem.* And the signal success bade the devoted apostles go forward in the sacred enterprise of proclaiming a crucified and ascended Saviour. And to the Church at large it addresses a similar language. Let her then train up her sons of promise for the sacred office; let her plant a spiritual watchman in every village of the territory she now claims; and let her despatch her heralds of truth to all the revolted nations under heaven.

From the day of Pentecost we also learn, *what kind* of preaching is fitted to accomplish the gracious designs of Heaven. The grand theme of Peter's discourse was *Jesus of Nazareth,*—his character, life, death, resurrection, and supremacy. He failed not to exhibit distinctly the sovereignty—the *determinate counsel*—as well as foreknowledge of God; while, with the same breath, he pressed on his hearers the conviction of *personal guilt.* He urged the duty of *immediate* repentance, and the necessity of a cordial faith in the Saviour, as *both Lord and Christ.* On these several topicks he spake with the utmost boldness. He could charge upon his hearers the crime of murdering God's beloved Son. He could say, that they perpetrated the deed with *wicked hands.* And it was from a sense of *guilt*, as well as danger, that they trembled.

Unwelcome as were the topicks of that discourse, it was adapted to accomplish the objects of the Christian ministry; as appeared from the result. Thus sanctioned, it is obviously worthy of the careful attention of all who minister at God's altar. From it let them learn, what should be the grand theme of their ministrations;—*Jesus Christ,* his character and offices: From it let them learn, what should ever be a leading object;—to make men *feel* that they are *guilty:* From it let them learn to proclaim explicitly and fearlessly the whole character of God, and the exact message with which they are charged from Him. In so doing they may awaken the rancour of a sc[illegible] unbelief; they may disturb the repose of a heedless impenitence; they may call forth the loud clamour, *This is an hard saying; who can bear it?* But they may also be ministers of *Salvation;* and contribute something to swell the honours of their King. Possibly, like Peter, they may "open the gate of heaven to a multitude of sinners."

Instead of being followers of inspired Apo[illegible]s, they *can* consult the prejudices and caprices of a world lying in sin. They c[illegible]ep aloof

from the cross of the despised Lamb, and the terrors of the burning Mount. They *can* cast a veil over the blackness of human depravity, and amuse when they ought to alarm. And for their reward they may receive the liberal caresses of the gay and the proud. But what will such men have accomplished for Christ, their Master?—or for the happiness of their hearers, when the visions of time shall have given place to the realities of Eternity? Who will be led to ponder on the mighty interests of the soul, the solemnity of death, the awfulness of Judgment, and the duration of future joy or wo? Who will be led to weep over his sins, to seek counsel from the page of Revelation, or to unburden an oppressed heart in the closet of prayer? What youth will become tired of his pursuits of gaiety and folly? What votary of ambition will stop in his eager chase after a phantom? Or what man of sordid avarice will chastise his idolatry, and pant for a treasure in heaven? It is not *every* ministry, that is fitted to reclaim the wayward; to restore to the human heart the lost image of God; and to prepare the sinner for a future crown. It is only the ministry of the *Gospel*;—that ministry which makes a full disclosure of whatever is humbling in the doctrines, and terrible in the sanctions, as well as cheering in the invitations and promises of the New Testament. And the usefulness of *such* a ministry was strikingly illustrated on that day, when the multitude were pricked in their hearts, and inquired, with no ordinary solicitude, what they should do, and wept over their sins, and submitted to God, and looked up with *a hope full of immortality*.

Wonder not, then, sinner, if the minister of Jesus, who would save himself and them that hear him, and who has such *examples* before him, does feel it his duty, to tear away the miserable veils which hide men from themselves, and to exhibit the unchanging majesty of God's Law, and the deep damnation that must ingulph the impenitent and unbelieving! For *herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment*.

5. The occurrences of the day of Pentecost exhibit the Christian minister's GRAND SOURCE OF ENCOURAGEMENT.

The apostles understood the nature of God's moral administration. They felt their utter incompetency to maintain the Christian cause in their own strength; but were still aware of the necessity of using the instituted means. Relying solely on the promise of the Saviour, *they were all with one accord in one place*—presenting doubtless a united and fervent supplication to Heaven for the aid they needed.—Filled with the Holy Ghost, they ventured to preach—they *spake forth the words*

of truth and soberness. And that same Spirit of truth carried their message with renovating power to the hearts and consciences of their hearers.

The ground of their success teaches, that the minister's grand source of encouragement, in all his labours, is *the promised influence of the Spirit.* He needs other aid than the man of merely secular business. He needs something more than the common blessing of the Most High. There is a peculiarity in the character of his work, which renders necessary a peculiarity in the agency of the Spirit. He seeks to convert mankind from the love and practice of iniquity to the love and service of God; to raise to a spiritual life such as are *dead in trespasses and sins.* The carnal mind is *enmity against God*—destitute of a single trace of its Maker's moral image. This enmity must be *slain;* and in its place must be substituted that *holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.*

To effect so entire a transformation of character, what human powers are adequate? Talents may dazzle, reasoning may confound, eloquence may charm and move, fortitude and zeal may press through a thousand disheartening difficulties; but GOD *only can convert. Not by might, nor by power, but by my* SPIRIT, *saith the Lord of hosts.* From this position, however, let the *sinner* make no other inference than that of the exceeding *sinfulness* and *obstinacy* of his own heart, which will yield only to Omnipotent Grace. It is nothing but *ingratitude* and *stubbornness of guilt,* that prevents his yielding at once *to the convictions of truth,* and giving his whole heart to God. So that, if left to perish in his obstinacy, he dies without excuse, and in the day of reckoning will be speechless. Let him not, then, aggravate his guilt by now *charging God foolishly.*

To the feebleness of merely human effort, in attempting to convert the sinner, experience bears most humiliating testimony. Within the compass of our charge is many a man of business, and many a youth of folly, on whom our eye of deep concern has often been fixed. We have noticed, with agony, their increasing aversion to the ways of God, and their increasing attachment to an unsatisfying world. We have hoped, all the while, that very soon some message from the throne of God might be the means of rousing their torpid sensibilities, and changing the current of their affections: but they never were devoted more exclusively and intensely to objects of a transitory nature, than at this moment. Gladly would we dissolve the spell by which they are bound; but their persevering unholiness, and their heedlessness about the eternal interests of the soul, proclaim to us the utter insufficiency of our efforts.

Not only, however, is the almighty Spirit the Christian minister's *grand* source of encouragement; it is a very *fruitful* source. Apart from

the special influence of the Spirit, the apostles had little indeed to encourage—and every thing to damp their hopes, and paralyze their energies. Yet they were not disheartened. They called to mind the precious promises of their Lord, and on them fastened their hope. They braved the contempt and opposition of thousands; and in their presence the strength of man became weakness, and the loftiness of man was abased.

Those promises which sustained apostles are ground of *perpetual* encouragement. Lo, I am with you *alway*, even unto the *end of the world*. Here then we see Omnipotence pledged to make the ministry of reconciliation an engine of resistless moral power, till *time shall be no longer*. Toils, vexations, and trials attend it; but so do peculiar consolations. Oh, it is cheering to reflect, that though man can neither convert nor convince, there is a power on high which *can* clothe his ministrations with almighty energy. A power it is, that can humble the proudest spirit. It can soften the hardest heart. It can extort from the most careless, in a moment, the inquiry of deep concern. It can instantaneously shed over our worshiping assembly the solemnity of the second death; and thrill every heart with the resistless mandate, *Awake thou that sleepest*. Nor is this a mere matter of ability. There is no degree of thoughtlessness, which it has not actually alarmed. There is no stubbornness of depravity, which it has not subdued,—as it has gone along with the ministrations of the sanctuary.

With such ground of encouragement, we will preach in hope. We will continue to illustrate and enforce the great truths of Christianity, relying for the fruit of our labours, on that Spirit of power and grace, whose prerogative it is to quicken and sanctify. With the sword of the Spirit, *which is the word of God*, we will continue to urge our appeals to the heart and conscience, till our voice shall become silent in the grave. And could we rise, hereafter, with the great multitude found *faithful unto death;* we would still say, with every creature in heaven—*Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy Name, give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake.*

One other lesson from the events of the day of Pentecost, and we have done.

6. The occurrences of that day exhibit the REALITY and IMPORTANCE of REVIVALS of RELIGION.

By a Revival of religion, we understand, *an uncommon and general interest on the subject of salvation, produced by the Holy Spirit, through*

the instrumentality of Divine truth. The work is very commonly preceded by a prevailing and affecting coldness on the subject of personal religion: such as leads Christians to feel the necessity of extraordinary prayer for themselves as well as others. In its progress, the thoughtless are alarmed; convinced of their guilt; inquire what they shall do; receive Jesus as their Saviour; rejoice in hope of future glory; join themselves to the people of God; and, in important respects, pursue a new course of life.

Such, substantially, was the Revival on the day of Pentecost. With the history of that day before us, we see thousands assemble, with no special solicitude about their souls; and many of them very decided in their opposition to Christiantiy. We see the same men, soon after, most deeply interested on the subject of salvation. We see them, in the anguish of awakened conscience, at the feet of despised apostles, inquiring what they must do. We see them resorting, with penitence and faith, to the mediation of Christ for pardon. We see them joining themselves to the little band of disciples; and devoting their influence and possessions to the cause of the Gospel. We ascribe that memorable work to the special agency of God's Spirit; and denominate it a *Revival of religion.* And when, in these latter days, and these ends of the earth, we witness a work of *similar character*, we feel bound to ascribe it to the same *Cause;* and think it proper to give to it the same name. We can perceive no good reason, why the former should be regarded as the work of God, and the latter as the work exclusively of man.

Do you say, that the excitement, denominated a Revival of religion, occurs in connexion with the special efforts of Christians? We answer, that the excitement on the day of Pentecost occurred in a similar connexion. When has a band of Christians been more united and fervent? Or when has a minister of Christ pressed the subject of religion with more plainness, pungency, and zeal, than did Peter, and his brethren? And again we reply, that God's instituted mode of extending the blessings of salvation, is through the faithful efforts of his servants. *If thou speakest not to warn the wicked of his way, he shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hand.*

Do you say, that the divine influence to which we allude, as to the *mode* of its operation, is enveloped in the darkness of *mystery?* So it was on the day of Pentecost. So is the *universal presence* of the Supreme a mystery. And so does a cloud of impenetrable obscurity hang over the *mode* of *all* his operations. If mystery must produce skepticism, tells us, where will your doubtings end?

Do you say, there is enthusiasm connected with the excitement, denominated a Revival of religion? Enthusiasm there sometimes may

have been. *Fanaticism* there may have been. But does such a fact prove the entire absence of genuine religion? Does it prove that *no* Revival is a sober, rational work? Possibly, had you lived eighteen centuries ago, you might, in pity, have pronounced Peter an enthusiast! and the events of the day of Pentecost a scene of wild phrenzy! But possibly, too, some *centuries hereafter*, you may mourn, too late, your *own madness:* Are not *you* the *enthusiast*, if you hope to enter heaven, despising the command of heaven's King!—*Strive to enter in at the straight gate. The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence.*

Do you say, that in a time of general excitement there will be instances of gross imposition on the Church? So it was in the Pentecost revival; when, in awful warning to hypocrites, Ananias and Sapphira fell down dead. But did their hypocrisy close the door of heaven against the thousands who sincerely repented? Or did it lessen their abhorrence of sin? or their everlasting gratitude to Him who made them to differ?

Do you say, that the excitement, denominated a Revival of religion, is often succeeded by instances of apostacy? We answer, that apostacies have likewise occurred under other circumstances. Of them the Church was forewarned by its Head, when he declared, *It must needs be that offences come.* And from the little band, collected by Himself in person, there was an apostate as vile as the Church ever embosomed. But did the perfidy of Judas disprove the sincerity of the rest? And if a Revival has been succeeded by defection, which evinces the hypocrisy or delusion of some, what does their fall prove, one way or the other, as to the religion of others?

In the progress of our experience, relating to such seasons of attention, we *have seen* circumstances which furnished overwhelming evidence of God's special presence. We have stood in awe of His majesty, in view of the general solemnity that reigned around us: a solemnity produced by no visible cause, other than the ordinary means of grace. We *have seen* the tide of gaiety and folly at once arrested, the loftiest look brought low, and the stoutest heart melted in penitence. We *have seen* the man of *morals*—intrenched for more than half a century within his refuges of lies, and dreaming of no danger—suddenly waked from his delusion, and—fearfully alarmed at the insecurity of his hiding-place—finding no rest, day nor night, till in the Ark of Safety. We *have seen* the slave of *appetite* and *lust* raised up from the debasement of a ruined fortune and character, and rescued as from the very *gate of hell!* We have seen him, afterwards, shining in the beauty of holiness, regaining the full confidence of community, and elevating his affections to the throne of God! And when we have witnessed facts like these, and have been aware of no other visible cause, than a plain, but calm exhi-

bition of Evangelical truth—we have instinctively exclaimed, *The work, O Lord, is thine; and it is marvellous in our eyes.*

But, not only does the day of Pentecost evince the *reality* of Revivals of religion; it furnishes reason to calculate on their existence, in all ages. Commencing as they did with the very commencement of Christianity, there was reason to believe they would accompany her in her march over the world. On such displays of Divine grace were fixed the hopes of the apostles. Nor in their expectations were they disappointed. The very first sermon preached by Peter in a *Gentile* province, was attended with similar effects. *The Holy Ghost came on all them that heard the word.* In proclaiming the Gospel, the apostles urged, as a motive to repentance, the animating fact, that *the times of refreshing had come from the presence of the Lord.* And by such repeated displays of Divine grace were they sustained, and peculiarly encouraged in their holy enterprise.

Ours is likewise an age of religious revival. Each passing year gives to it this character in still more distinctive features. And doubtless as the period of Zion's universal triumph comes on, these showers of God's grace will exhibit still greater majesty and power. The victories of the Spirit will become more and more extended, as well as illustrious. All Christendom is yet to be overshadowed by one vast cloud of Divine influence. Lands, doomed for generations to a state of moral darkness and death, shall be watered and made fruitful, *like the garden of God.* And in the holy City itself, *now trodden down of the Gentiles*, shall be repeated those displays of power and grace, which attended the first preaching of the Cross.

The occurrences of the day of Pentecost exhibit likewise the *importance* of Revivals of religion. If they are actually of God, we know that their influence must be only salutary. Look back then to that memorable Revival, which ushered in the Christian ministry; and tell us if its influence was at all otherwise than salutary. On the very day of its commencement, about three thousand were turned from darkness to light: and, during its continuance, *the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved.* Were they less honest, sober, benevolent, than before their conversion? Or were they less qualified for the dread trial of the Last Day? In a single day, it gave to the Christian Church a weight of influence, more than a hundred fold greater than it had previously possessed. And whilst it gave new impulse to her efforts, it was the occasion of dismay to her opposers. The testimony it bore to the dignity of Jesus, and the truth of Christianity, will exert a blessed influence forever.

The happy influence of a Revival may be viewed, distinctly, in its effects, on individual happiness; on the interests of the community; and on the general cause of religion.

It is important to *individual* happiness. Such religious character as it creates is the only safe pledge of a peaceful life. You can spare the aggrandizements of wealth, and the parade of earthly distinction. But, in this world of disease, disappointment, and death, you *can not* spare the consolations of a Christian hope. But a single glance into *eternity* stamps immeasureable value on the religious character which is originated in a season of Revival. Oh, beware of risking the trial of the Great Day, in any other character, than that which produced by the transforming Spirit. You may have passed through a season of religious attention, and in it become a happy subject of God's grace. Others may attach to it a trivial importance; but by yourself it shall be recurred to with ecstacy, and with thanksgiving to God, when the heavens shall be no more.

A religious Revival exerts a happy influence on the *community at large*. The Gospel and the sanctifying Spirit, wherever they enter, enlighten, elevate, and purify. Their dominion over the heart secures a regularity of deportment, an industrious improvement of time, a scrupulous discharge of the varied duties of life. Often has a short period of the Spirit's gracious operation allayed the asperity of contention; calmed the tumult of a noisy rabble; put an end to scenes of midnight wickedness; brought relief to dwellings of domestic want and wo; and greatly elevated the intellectual, as well as moral character of society.

On the *general cause of religion* the influence of a Revival is immense, as well as salutary. The happy influence is not circumscribed by the limits of the Spirit's immediate operation. It may reach to the ends of the earth—and onward through time. It may be the commencing link in a chain of operations, which shall issue in the rescue of millions from the agonies of the second death.

Revivals hasten the universal triumph of the Gospel. Let the Churches of Christendom be found, this year, *with one accord* pleading the Redeemer's great promise—Let every city and village be a theatre of Revivals, like that in which Peter and his associates were the visible agents, —and it would be the ushering in of millennial glory.

If then the work we are contemplating be indeed a work of God; and if such be its influence on *individual happiness*—on the interests of *society* —and on the *general cause of religion*,—O give to it, Christian brethren, the full ardour of your affections and prayers. Go to the place of secret communion with God, to the domestic altar, to the social meeting, to the sanctuary of the Most High, with the effectual fervent peti-

tion,—*O Lord, revive thy work.* Do you ask for encouragement? Know that He has declared himself more ready to grant the Holy Spirit, than parents are to give good gifts to their children. Do you need examples of devotedness? Fix your eye on those holy apostles—who, after having turned thousands to righteousness, were counted worthy to suffer *martyrdom* for the name of Christ. Ye *have not yet resisted unto* BLOOD, *striving against sin.* Do you lack motive? Open your eye upon the scene that lies within the compass of your vision.—Perhaps religion is languishing. Perhaps the commandments of God are openly violated. Perhaps the world, in its varied forms of attraction, is the all-engrossing object. Perhaps the tide of population is pressing on in a direction ominous of a dreary eternity. Ascend some lofty eminence, and extend your view over the earth. Mark the territory enlightened by Revelation, and reclaimed from the destroyer;—how small it is! Leave for a moment this world, so soon to be wrapped in consuming fire, and approach the Celestial. Survey the glory, and hearken to the hosannas of the saved. Then look down on the awful contrast!—and onward beyond the Judgment scene! Under the influence of what you have discovered—go back to your devotions. And, like the weeping Prophet, who beheld these realities with more than mortal eye, in God's strength make your firm resolve,—that *for Zion's sake you will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.*

We are not so visionary as to expect an unusual success in the progress of religion, unless there are unusual omens. But, says one of the brightest spirits of England, "A most emphatical spirit of prayer would *be* such an omen." And the individual, who should solemnly determine to try its last possible efficacy, might probably find himself becoming a much more prevailing agent in his little sphere. And if the whole, or greater number, of the disciples of Christianity, were, with an earnest, unalterable resolution of each, to combine that Heaven should not withhold one single influence which the very utmost effort of conspiring and persevering supplication would obtain, it would be the sign that a revolution of the world was at hand."

Nor can I suppress the consideration, that, even now, there are signs, which seem to afford peculiar eencuragement to such special and united prayer for a universal Revival It was a striking proof of the determination of Heaven to spread the Gospel through the world, that Jerusalem should have been selected as the place, and the day of Pentecost as the season, for the first great out-pouring of the Spirit: because a blow then and there struck could not fail to tell with emphasis on all the surrounding nations. So, in our own day, it is a sig-

nal from Heaven, of no ordinary import, that the Spirit is actually descending in power on several of our large Cities and towns, as well as on Colleges and Seminaries of learning. The consequence of which is, that men of wealth and extended influence are brought to *count all things but loss for Christ;* and champions of truth and heralds of salvation are thus multiplied. At the same time, the Missionary channels, which are daily opening, and the Religious Publications, which are circulating, by thousands and by tens of thousands, afford facilities of communication, altogether unparallelled in the history of Christ's kingdom. So that now, as on the day of Pentecost, the influence of a great Revival might be at once felt through the world. Let, then, the whole multitude of disciples now *lift up their eyes unto the Heavens;* let them say with one accord,—*Come from the four winds, O Breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live,—that thy way may be known upon earth, and thy saving health among all nations.*

And now, ye commissioned *servants of the Living God*, this whole subject speaks with solemn emphasis to you and to me. But here, I am aware, it becomes a young man to be reserved. I will only repeat the words of one, whom, like Peter, the Spirit of God hath greatly honoured.—"How soon, my brethren, will the amazing realities of Judgment and Eternity break upon our unearthly vision, and fill us either with ecstacy or despair! I cast my thoughts forward but a little, and behold, the dead are rising, the elements melting, saints rejoicing, devils trembling. The Judge appears upon his great white throne—In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, we are before the judgment seat, with our respective flocks. The faithful and the unfaithful shepherds of every age are there. The trial proceeds, the books are closed, the final sentence is pronounced. The heavens are opened, and the pit yawns—the eternal song and the eternal wail are both begun. O may we then rise, with a great multitude saved through our unworthy instrumentality, to shine with them, *as the brightness of the firmament—as the stars forever and ever.*" AMEN.

THE

NATIONAL PREACHER.

Go....Teach all Nations.....*Mat.* xxviii. 19.

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SERMONS XI. & XII.

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THE BENEFIT OF AFFLICTIONS.

HEBREWS, XII. 10.—*But He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness.*

That there is a great deal of affliction in this world, none will deny. No period, no station, no circumstances of life are exempt. Sorrow invades us through a thousand different avenues. We suffer in our property, in our character, in our friends. *Riches* often *take to themselves wings and flee away.* Even the earnings of honest industry, the savings of temperance and economy, may be torn from us by the hand of adversity, and we be left in that state from which the wise man earnestly prayed to be preserved. Our character, our *good name which is better than precious ointment*, the result of integrity and uprightness, may become the sport of the *tale-bearer;* may be assailed by the tongue of slander. In the sufferings of our friends our sorrows may also be multiplied. Their death pierces our hearts with anguish of a peculiar kind. Our minds, while the body is in health, often feel the most exquisite sensations of pain. *Hope deferred maketh the heart sick.* Unexpected occurrences often blast our most sanguine expectations, and leave us to all the bitterness of disappointment. Our bodies, also, so *fearfully and wonderfully made*, are so much the more liable to disease and suffering. Every limb, every organ, every nerve, may be the seat of disorder and excruciating anguish. At length the principle of animal life is extinct; this *earthly house is dissolved, and man goeth to his long home.*

If such, then, be the fact; if no age, no station, no connexion in this life is exempted from suffering; if to be an inhabitant of this earth, to

be a child of Adam, is to be an heir of misery; surely the art of turning these afflictions to a good purpose—of deriving great and lasting benefit from them, must be more important to us, than the art of changing other substances into gold. For did we possess millions of wealth, this would not shield us from suffering and from death; but if these afflictions *work together for our good*, then the immortal spirit may rejoice in tribulation, and triumph in hope, while the body suffers and dissolves, and *returns to the earth as it was.*

This lesson is frequently and clearly taught in the Bible: and, if we mistake not, in the text. Let us then contemplate,

I. THE LIGHT IN WHICH AFFLICTIONS OUGHT TO BE VIEWED, AND THE DISPOSITION WITH WHICH THEY OUGHT TO BE RECEIVED.

II. THEIR TENDENCY WHEN THUS VIEWED AND RECEIVED, TO PROMOTE OUR SPIRITUAL INTEREST.

1. You are to view and receive afflictions *as coming from the hand of God;*—as sent by Him whose *kingdom ruleth over all.* You have only to open your Bible, and this truth will meet your eye in almost every page. All those diseases to which you are liable, are most explicitly ascribed to divine agency. When nations, or individuals were to be chastised, the pestilence is called for, and its course is directed, until His purpose, who administers the correction, is fully accomplished. It is stated in Scripture, that *all the diseases of Egypt, also every sickness and every plague*, though not mentioned in the book of the law, are sent and controlled by the hand of God. If, in subsequent ages, intemperance and licentious habits of living, or any other causes, have generated diseases unknown to former times, still they do not move without His direction. And even death itself, the termination of all earthly enjoyment, is as clearly ascribed to God, as the creation of the world. *I know*, says the pious and afflicted Job, *that thou wilt bring me to death. He killeth and he maketh alive.* All other calamities with which you can possibly be afflicted are also his messengers. If the devouring flame consumes your property; if the tempest or hurricane visits you with desolation; this *fire* and this *stormy wind* are but his servants, *fulfilling his pleasure.*

It is true that these afflictions take place through the instrumentality of second causes; that is, they are sent in the dispensations of Providence, and not by miraculous power. Yet these second causes, many of them at least, have no intelligence, and of course, can form no design to visit you with affliction. Your diseases are often contracted from *the air* impregnated with noxious qualities. But this air, this vapour,

holds no consultation, forms no design to produce this effect; and yet it does not take place without design. A second cause, indeed, necessarily implies the existence and agency of a First, controlling and directing the second. When, therefore, it is your Father's intention to afflict you with disease, *he causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth*, gives them their necessary qualities, directs their course, and limits their effect, and His purpose is accomplished. This is true respecting all the calamities with which you may be visited; whatever means may be employed, the hand which guides them is the hand of God. Your own agency may be thus employed; your safety may be secured through your own prudence and care; or your health may be restored, your sorrows lightened by means of human skill. In either case, however, the wisdom and the power of God are to be acknowledged. His wisdom forms the design; his hand guides the progress and limits the effect of all these means. Also, when you are chastised, whatever the rod may be, it is your Father's hand, which administers the chastisement. *Affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground.* They must be traced back to the Great First Cause, with whom there is neither chance nor accident; but who works according to a definite plan, formed *after the council of his own wisdom.*

2. You are to view and receive your afflictions *as deserved.* You are not for a moment to suppose, that they are arbitrary in their design, or sent without such reasons as are amply sufficient to justify them, in the view of infinite justice and wisdom. *The Lord doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.* There is a cause for every kind and degree of sorrow which you taste: and this cause is found in yourselves; in your own *sinfulness.*

Why has this world, in every age, exhibited such scenes of protracted and complicated misery? Why is every child of Adam born heir to a large inheritance of suffering? From what inexhaustible source have these streams of bitterness continued to flow and overspread the earth? This world, with all its changes, from the greatest to the very least, is under the government of a being, infinite in wisdom, power and goodness. His power could prevent these sufferings, if the designs of his wisdom required it; his goodness *would* prevent them, if there were not cause for a different treatment of us. When this world came from the hand of its Creator, it bore no marks of his displeasure. Every thing proclaimed his benignity. But now, this earth is filled with miseries; the unequivocal marks of the divine displeasure; and the man's transition from time to eternity is often attended by circumstances most appalling to human feelings.

The Bible gives us the only satisfactory information on this subject, so solemnly interesting to us. Death, indeed, with all his ministers, with all his precursors, has reigned, and is reigning over the human race. Sin, however, had first entered; and misery and death are its legitimate consequences. *By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.* The first man wilfully transgressed the positive command of God, and thereby drew down upon himself the divine displeasure, and subjected his posterity, in every age, to misery and death. Sin, therefore, is the procuring cause of all the sufferings of men; and, as all have sinned, so all inherit this legacy of wo. This accounts for all your calamities, and shows their perfect consistency with that Goodness which governs the world.

The sufferings of men, it is true, are great; but their guilt is still greater. Take a single individual, for the sake of experiment; observe him through every stage of life; form an estimate of all his sufferings of mind and of body; finish the account with his dying agonies; and then multiply this amount by all the woes of all the millions of mankind who have lived and suffered since the creation: and how amazing will be the result! If any difficulty should arise in attempting to reconcile this inconceivable amount of misery with the goodness of God; make another estimate. Take the same, or some other individual; consider him as a moral agent, accountable to God for what he is, and for what he does; consider his sins of childhood, of youth, of manhood, of old age, in thought, in word, and in deed; consider the aggravation of these sins from a variety of causes,—from the preserving care, and the forbearance of God, and above all from the abuse of infinite mercy, offered through a crucified Saviour; multiply this amount of guilt,—we know not by what numbers,—by such, however, as will correspond with the millions of men who have lived and sinned from the first to the present moment. There is no necessity to exceed the truth. The guilt of *one* individual exceeds the comprehension of men or angels; the guilt of *a world* can be comprehended only by the Infinite Mind. Your amazement must now be,—not that there is so much,—but so *little* suffering in the world; not that such a vast and irresistible tide of misery has deluged and swept the earth of its inhabitants,—but that a single trace of divine benignity is to be found; that a single blessing is enjoyed, in a world filled with such bold and wilful rebellion. There is no feature of the divine government calculated to strike the mind with more profound and holy admiration, than the forbearance of our of-

fended Sovereign,—in that this earth, deluged with crimes, is not made the theatre of immediate and inexorable vengeance on the workers of iniquity. Truly *judgment is His strange work; goodness and mercy are his delight.*

Here, then, you see the true cause of all the sufferings of mankind, and of your own individually. It is SIN. Let then the association of sin as the cause, and misery as the consequence, be so clear, and so habitual in your mind, that whenever you witness or suffer the chastisements of God, sin may present itself as that which *deserves* this suffering. Deal honestly and faithfully with yourself. Lose not yourself in the crowd, by simply admitting that you belong to a sinful race, and are thus liable to your part of the sufferings which that race deserves. Content not yourself with viewing sin in the aggregate, a part of which belongs to you. This will never produce that impression with which you ought to receive afflictions. Men of wealth are not willing, in this manner, to dispose of their property; to throw it into a common stock from which they will receive but an equal share with others, or only so much as their real wants may demand. Here they contend for individual right. With the same care ought you to keep the account of your own sins. Others may be more or less guilty than yourself. You may witness and lament their sins; but you ought to *feel and confess your own.* Then will you be deeply convinced that you *deserve* all the sufferings with which God is pleased to visit you.

3. You ought to view and receive your afflictions *as intended to promote your improvement in holiness;*—as means to correct the evil dispositions of your heart, and the sinful habits and practices of your life. Your afflictions, of every kind and degree, are sent with design; and this design is always good and wise. Such is the testimony of the Bible; and especially of that passage from which our text is taken. God is represented as administering his chastisements—not as a stranger, much less as an enemy,—but as a kind and affectionate Father. Earthly parents may love their children; yet they are imperfect; some degree of unhallowed feeling may mingle with their love; the correction which they give, may be, in part, to gratify this feeling. Yet because the correction is deserved, and right in itself, the good child will submit, and reverence the hand which corrects. Your Heavenly Father can have no such desire to gratify in your affliction; your suffering, considered in itself, gives him no pleasure. He corrects with no other intention than to render you more humble, more patient, more watchful, more devoted

to his service. These distresses, these siftings, are for the trial of your faith, that it may be strengthened, and thus *be found unto praise and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.*

A child would consider the stripes inflicted by an enemy, as given to gratify hatred or malice; of course, irritation and resentment would be the result: or, perhaps, a slavish fear and dread. But if corrected by a benevolent parent, who is *believed to have the kindest intention*, the result will be reformation, dutiful submission, and increased affection for the parent. Let this child be the pattern for your imitation. Though you know that your afflictions come from the hand of God; and that you deserve them; yet, unless you receive them as given in love, they will not produce the desired effect. When, therefore, the rod of correction is felt, do not consider Him who holds it, as a Judge, inflicting the punishment which justice demands; but as a Father, watching over you with loving kindness; yearning over you with the most tender commiseration while you suffer; calling you back from your wanderings to cheerful obedience, to greater confidence in His grace, and to more intimate communion with Himself. Thus viewed, your afflictions may *work for good;*—may fit you for that *rest which remaineth for the people of God.*

4. Receive your afflictions *with humble and earnest prayer to God, that they may exert a sanctifying influence;*—that your ignorance of their design, your unbelief, your impenitence may not render them ineffectual. You as much need the influences of the Divine Spirit, in making a right improvement of your afflictions, as in exercising faith and repentance. The Gospel, in itself, is calculated to produce a powerful and happy effect on the human mind; yet, unless the quickening Spirit accompanies this Gospel, it will be resisted, and fail of producing this effect. So your afflictions, though in themselves calculated to correct your errors and promote your spiritual interests, will not produce these effects, unless God, the Spirit, *of his good pleasure worketh in you, both to will and to do.* Is it criminal and dangerous to neglect the Gospel and its *great salvation?* So is it to neglect the Fatherly chastisements appointed for you. That same infinite wisdom, which designed the wondrous plan of redemption, designed these chastisements as means, in part, of preparing you for *the inheritance of the saints in light.* Are the sufferings and death of the Divine Saviour evidence of the love of God? So are the sorrows, which you are called to endure in this life. You are as certainly accountable to God for the improvement or neglect of your afflictions, as of the Gospel, or of the Saviour himself.

Ask, then, with humble importunity, and God will cause your afflictions to produce in you *the peaceable fruits of righteousness.*

If you should, with kindness and discretion, administer correction to your child, and it should manifest an indifference to the effect of that correction, your displeasure would be increased; because your intention and your hopes would be disappointed. If it should manifest opposition to your intention, you would be still more displeased; because this would be still further from your hopes than mere indifference. In like manner your Heavenly Father must be displeased, if you feel indifferent respecting the effect which your afflictions may produce; and still more so, if you feel opposed to the design with which they are sent. The only way, therefore, to avoid this displeasure, is to cherish an earnest desire that they may make you wise unto salvation; that by them you may be purified, like gold tried with fire: *that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, may be found unto praise and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.*

And now, brethren, in review of what has been suggested, let the honest inquiry be made by each of you—With what spirit are you accustomed to regard the afflictive visitations of Providence? Do you view and receive them, *as coming from the hand of God?* In the day of adversity, do you hear Him speaking to you, in language plainer and more impressive than an audible voice from heaven? Or are you utterly regardless of the Source, whence afflictions come, and of the lessons they inculcate?

Do you view and receive them, *as deserved by your transgressions?* and, indeed, as infinitely less grievous than your *sins deserve?* Or are you accustomed to consider your case as *hard?* and your afflictions as coming upon you without *just cause?* Do you thus charge God with *severity?* or do you say, in meek submission, *Righteous art thou, O Lord, and upright are thy judgments?*

Do you view and receive afflictions, *as intended to promote your spiritual improvement?* and do they have this effect on your heart? Do they make you more humble, more patient, more heavenly-minded, more kind to your neighbour, and more devoted to God? Or do they have the awful effect of *hardening* your heart, and alienating your affections from God and your fellow-men? Can you say, with the pious psalmist, *Before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now have I kept thy word?* Or have you rather *dealt proudly—despised reproof—sinned against judgments*—and thus *been treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath?*

Have you received afflictions *with humble and earnest prayer, that*

they might be sanctified to you?—that by them you might be made wiser and better? Or have you rather yielded to them as a matter of *necessity*—without one earnest petition, that the chastisements of God might make you *wise unto salvation?*

God, in his holy providence, is thus putting each of you on trial;—is giving you the opportunity of sitting in judgment on your own soul, before you come to the tremendous trial of the Great Day. O, be faithful to yourself now, that you may not be ashamed and confounded in that Day. And do thou still *search us, Great God, and try us,* if need be, *in the midst of the furnace,*—that we may not fall under the *power of thine anger,* when there is *none to deliver!*

SERMON XII.

HEBREWS, XII. 10.—*But He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness.*

Having, in the preceding discourse, contemplated the light in which afflictions ought to be viewed, and the disposition with which they ought to be received; we are now,

II. TO CONSIDER THEIR TENDENCY WHEN THUS VIEWED AND RECEIVED TO PROMOTE OUR SPIRITUAL INTEREST.

That we might be partakers of his holiness:—that is, of the holiness which he requires. Holiness consists in conformity to the will of God. Its great and operative principle is faith in Christ; or the knowledge and cordial belief of the Bible. This word, which is *quick and powerful,* vital and energetic, like seed sown in good ground, has its fruit unto holiness, *the end of which is eternal life.* Afflictions have a tendency to promote the great work.

1. *They teach you the evil nature of sin,* on account of which they are sent, *and point you to the Saviour.* Practical lessons are the best of all lessons. In the Scriptures you are taught, that sin is an evil,—a great and destructive evil; in the calamities of life you taste, in some degree, the bitterness of this evil. The Lord is graciously pleased to vouchsafe to his beloved children an earnest, a foretaste of the joys which are at his right hand; and thus to encourage, animate, and lead them on towards *the heavenly Zion.* So does he, in the numerous and various

afflictions of life, give a foretaste of the inseparable consequences of sin. Thus you experience the truth of the Bible. This experience of the bitterness of sin, will awaken that fear, which is natural to man under the apprehension of danger, and which becomes a powerful motive urging you to seek a refuge from that wrath, of which you have now but a foretaste. No refuge can be found, that will answer this purpose, but in the crucified Saviour. Whatever, therefore, will bring you to this Saviour, partakes of the nature of holiness; for it is according to the will of God. For *this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.* That Divine Redeemer, by whom you are *saved from wrath*, will thus become exceedingly precious, and you will *cleave to him with full purpose of heart. More to be desired*, will His word become, in your estimation, *than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter, also, than honey and the honey-comb.* Gratitude will thus habitually spring up in your bosom: the devout language of which will be, *Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable Gift.* Here you find a safe refuge from the impending vengeance. The love and power of sin will thus be destroyed; and faith in Jesus Christ, and love to God will reign in your heart.

In this world where sin prevails, there is no possible escape from sorrow and distress. This circumstance will endear so much the more to your heart, that heaven, where there is no sin, and of course, no sorrow; where *God shall wipe away tears from off all faces.* As the hireling longs for the setting sun, when his labour will end; as the mariner, clinging to a single fragment of his broken ship, thinks of the safety enjoyed on shore; so, by the sorrows and conflicts of this troublous region, will you be reminded of that blissful state, where *the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.* These conflicts will cause the soul to stretch all her powers, with more intense desire, towards that *better country*, where alone there is exemption from calamity and pain. These desires not only support you under your afflictions, but they prepare you for the *joy of your Lord.* Thus death, the last enemy, will be disarmed of his sting; and heaven will be endeared to your hearts. Blessed effects, precious fruits of affliction!

2. Afflictions teach you another practical, and therefore useful lesson;—*The utter insufficiency of this world, as a portion for the soul.* In days of prosperity you may not be thoroughly convinced of this. The enjoyments of life have their place and their value, and demand your gratitude to God; the sympathies and endearments of friendship are im-

portant sources of human happiness. But none of these, nor all of these together, can satisfy the heart oppressed with heavy affliction. No sooner do the waves of adversity strike and break around you, than you feel your need of consolation from a higher Source. To the man, whose heart is bleeding under the anguish of the last adieu of some dear friend, the splendours of wealth have lost their power to give comfort. God alone can be his Comforter. If he has taken the world as his portion, he now finds it utterly insufficient to drive away his sorrow, or to support him under it. To the man whose spirit is departing to another state, the pleasures, the honours, the riches of this world are unavailing. To him an humble hope in the mercy of God is of more value than the wealth and sceptre of empires. Plainly and frequently as this truth is taught in the Bible, yet how slow are men to learn; how slight is the conviction which it leaves on the mind! To quicken your perception, to render this conviction more deep and influential, your heavenly Father, with great kindness and wisdom, uses his chastising rod; and thus gives you a practical sense of his own truth. You are thus brought to see, that in the hour of affliction, or on the bed of death, your choice is not between different sources of earthly comfort; for these all fail; but between absolute despair and the Lord Jehovah, as the *joy of your heart.*

This will explain a case which you have sometimes witnessed, and perhaps experienced. A slight affliction may overcome and disquiet the mind with suspicions and complaints, with rebellious murmurings and repinings, and occasion a degree of distress quite disproportioned to the cause by which it is produced; while a much heavier stroke is perhaps borne with meek submission, with heavenly fortitude. The slight affliction touches but one rivulet of earthly pleasure, and you have recourse to those which are still left; but the heavier stroke dries up the very source of all earthly comfort, and leaves you to sink, or depend on God alone. The slight affliction you attempt to bear in your own strength, which is perfect weakness; the heavier stroke is no sooner felt, than you are convinced, that if the same God who inflicts the wound, does not heal, you must be overwhelmed; and your language now is, *Lord save, or I perish.*

Sometimes what you call afflictions are sent to remove those objects which occupy more of your thoughts and affections than is consistent with sincere and entire devotedness to God. That wealth which is imperceptibly, it may be, but really, withdrawing your heart from God, is lost through the fraud or negligence of others; or it is borne away on the wings of devouring flame; or it is ingulphed in the ocean. That

fame which was producing similar effects, is assailed by the tongue of slander. That friend, that dear child, whose increasing loveliness, whose unfolding beauties, were entwining themselves more closely with every fibre of your heart, is cut down like a flower, in the morning of life. These endearing objects are removed, that you may be delivered from the snare which they bring, and that your heart may be given supremely to God.

Sometimes one affliction is intended to prevent another that would be more grievous. Had Absalom died in infancy the grief of his father would have been much less than it was from the subsequent life and death of that ungrateful son. When Joseph's coat was presented to his father, the venerable patriarch was deeply afflicted, and refused to be comforted. Yet this affliction had a connection, mysterious, indeed, a the moment, with the preservation of his own life, and the life of his whole family. The righteous are sometimes *taken away from the evil to come.* Welcome, therefore, should be those calamities, which are kindly intended, and which often produce the happiest effects. They should engrave on your heart this truth; *O Lord God of hosts, blessed is the man who trusteth in Thee.*

3. Afflictions *excite and increase some of the most amiable and pious dispositions of the human heart;* and thus greatly promote your spiritual interest. Unless some disappointment is experienced, unless the loss of some valued object is sustained, there is no place for *submission* to the will of God; there is nothing to call this disposition into exercise. No man knows what his character really is, until he is tried; nor until these trials are so varied, as to reach every principle of action, and source of feeling. If all your schemes were successfully accomplished; if all that you esteem valuable remained safe in your possession, you would not know, whether or not, in a change of circumstances, you could exercise that calm resignation—that meek submission—which becomes the Christian character. That you may have this proof of your love to God—that you may *perfect holiness in the fear of God*—he sends you these trials, varied and repeated, according to his wisdom, until the object is answered; until, in the spirit of holy acquiescence, you are enabled to say, under the severest disappointments and losses; *The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; and blessed be the name of the Lord: Not my will, but thine be done.*

Patience is another Christian virtue, for the exercise of which exemption from suffering would leave no room. Unless some degree of pain is actually felt, you can no more exercise patience than you can

forgive when no injury has been received. Without this feature, your character would be imperfect, as the human countenance would be with the loss of one of its features. It is, therefore, the design and the tendency of affliction to supply this deficiency; for *tribulation worketh patience.* Therefore, *my brethren, count it all joy, when ye fall into divers temptations: knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.*

You have not only trials sent for the exercise of this virtue, but you have examples set before you for imitation. You have the *prophets, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience;* you have Job, not less distinguished for his calamities than for the patience with which he endured them. You have all those, *who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises;* and you have above all, the example of Jesus, the Saviour, who patiently *endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. Despise not,* therefore, these *chastenings of the Lord;* for they have an important influence in preparing you for the joys and glories of heaven. Through them the *love of God is shed abroad in your heart, by the Holy Spirit.*

4. This reminds us of another important advantage resulting from afflictions: When viewed in their true light, and received with a proper spirit, *they are most satisfactory proofs of the love of God.* This point is illustrated by a reference to earthly parents. You love your own child. This love is manifested not only by a prompt and kind attention to all its real wants, but also by correction, when deemed necessary. Should you neglect to give this correction, it would be a proof that your affection for the child is not genuine. It is not love, but hatred, according to the language of inspiration, from which such neglect proceeds. *He that spareth his rod, hateth his son; but he that loveth him, chastiseth him betimes.* (Prov. xiii. 24) The child desires nothing but present indulgence, perfectly ignorant, and, of course, regardless, what influence this indulgence will have on its future life. But you are not ignorant of this influence; observation and experience have convinced you, that many of the habits formed, and the passions and appetites nourished by such indulgence, would be destructive of its future usefulness, respectability and peace. It is therefore the dictate of reason and humanity, as well as of inspiration, that if milder measures fail to answer the purpose, correction must be administered; and the most sincere and tender love that ever warmed the parental bosom, will lead to such correction; not once or

twice only, but as often as it shall be needed; until the child is taught to follow, as its guide, your will, not its own. If you neglect this correction, you will be accountable for the future misery and disgrace of this child; and in the day of final reckoning, its ruin may be found charged to your want of proper affection. At the same time, if your kindness has been what it ought to be, the child will feel the assurance of your love. My father, it will say, or my mother, has always been kind to me; has provided for my wants; has relieved my distresses; in her own bosom has soothed my sorrows; with great watchfulness has guarded me from danger; I know, I feel, that she loves me. But the very hand, which has so often wiped away my tears, now corrects me, now gives me pain. Although she loves me, she is displeased with my conduct, because it is wrong, and will lead to some future evil, from which she wishes and intends to preserve me by this correction; I will, therefore, submit, and love her the more for this kindness.

All this is plain, and of easy application to your case. You are ignorant of the changes which await you in future; you cannot tell *what a day or an hour may bring forth;* nor can you tell what influence present events may have on these changes, or what will best prepare you for them. Still less do you know the influence which temporal occurrences may have on your eternal existence; to raise you higher, or sink you lower in the mansions of bliss. But all this is known to your Father in heaven. He sees what influence present events will have on those which are future; and what the effect of all these events will be on your condition in eternity. His plan of discipline is so wisely arranged that one event shall prepare you for the next in order; this, again, for the next; and that the whole series, terminating only with death, shall have a happy bearing on your everlasting state. If he sees that afflictions will produce effects on your character which other means have failed to produce; effects which are essential to your future advancement in holiness, and to your final exaltation in glory; he may, in kindness, subject you to losses of property, of reputation, of health, of friends. He may thus detach your affections from an unsatisfying world, and promote in you that *spiritual-mindedness, which is life and peace.* By these *light afflictions, which endure but for a moment, he may work out for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.*

There is another view of this subject which leads to the same conclusion. Your chastisements are, indeed, on account of your sins; but they bear no proportion to the guilt of those sins. *He hath not dealt with you*

after your sins; nor rewarded you after your iniquities. They are, therefore, corrective, and not penal; sent *for your profit*, not for your destruction. They are manifestations of that love which will save you; not of that wrath which will consume you. You have judgment, it is true, but not *without mercy*; your cup is bitter, indeed, but not without consolation; he afflicts you, but he does not forsake you; he sustains you under all your trials. *Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all.* You may, therefore, view tribulation, as Paul did, as *pouring forth* the love of God into your heart, that is, furnishing clear and satisfactory proof of His love to you.

This conviction, founded as it is on scriptural evidence, is calculated to exert a transforming influence on the heart and life. It will warm the coldest bosom with love to God; for *we love him, because he first loved us.* This love in the heart will be a motive to cheerful obedience: for *this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.* It will suppress every rebellious feeling, silence every impatient murmur under the trials of life, and sustain and comfort you in *the valley of the shadow of death;* and finally raise you to that world, where *there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain.*

REMARKS.

1. In the light of this subject, we see the reason, why so many instances of affliction fail to produce any good and lasting effect. They are not viewed in a proper light, nor received with a right spirit. By multitudes the agency of God is not acknowledged in them. They are traced back to the operation of natural causes, or of human agency, and no further; no divine hand is seen controlling these subordinate agencies. You might as soon expect the child to be benefited by correction, when its views extend no further than the rod, with which that correction is given, as that those can be benefited by afflictions, who do not acknowledge in them the hand of God. Such men, as it regards their afflictions, are ATHEISTS, *without God in the world.* Those who are determined to persevere in transgression, have no correct views of sin. In their own opinion, their guilt is too small to deserve any severe reprehension. In the hour of distress their spirits are disquieted, and break forth in impatient exclamations, which, like the groans and cries of irrational animals, are strong indications of pain and suffering, but have no other meaning. Afflictions do not answer the purpose of a mirror, reflecting on their view their own guilt. Such hearts resist the tendency of afflictions to do good. As

the hand of God is not acknowledged in them, they are considered as coming without design, either good or bad; and especially without any design to lead them to repentance. Nor is there, in such men, the slightest desire that their sufferings should issue in reformation. The spirit of prayer is an alien from all the impenitent. They may use the name of God, indeed; but it is only as a mere exclamation, savouring more of profaneness than of prayer. If they direct their desires for relief to God, it is not with the purpose of spending future life in his service, but of returning to their sinful pleasures. Let all such hear the warning voice of God:—*He that, being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.* Which leads me to remark,

2. This subject furnishes solemn reproof and warning to such as have experienced affliction, and yet have not repented. Have you not found that the cup is bitter? This bitterness is the genuine extract of your own sins, prepared and given, that by this foretaste you might be admonished and repent. With the admonition came this timely and affectionate warning; *Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish.* Those who perish, will find—not a single cup of bitterness—but *an horrible tempest*—a deluge of divine, unmingled wrath. Is it no encouragement, that, instead of being doomed to destruction, you have been spared and preserved? preserved, too, that you might have *space for repentance.* Surely this kindness is encouraging. Instead of destruction, God has sent you afflictions; light, when compared with your guilt; short, when compared with eternity. Do you still wait for invitation? God the Father, who afflicts you, and who afflicted his beloved Son for your sake, invites you; Jesus Christ, who died for sinners, invites you; *the Spirit*, the Comforter, *says, Come;* and this would be the language, could you hear their voice, of *the spirits of just men made perfect*, as well as of the whole Church on earth. How deeply interesting is your situation! The *next* affliction may decide your eternal destiny. Hearken then to the voice of God; *Turn ye at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you; I will make known my words unto you. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those that put their trust in Him.*

Lastly. This subject affords instruction and peculiar encouragement to Christians. You must not expect to escape the chastisements of your Father; he will give you this proof of your adoption into his family. During your successive trials, you may discover the latent evils of your heart,

the weakness of your religious principles and affections, the defects of your character. These discoveries might not be made in prosperity; and yet they are important to your progress in the divine life. They teach you to be more watchful, more humble, more earnest in prayer for divine aid; they render more precious to your heart Jesus, and his atoning blood, *which cleanseth from all sin.* Then bear every loss, endure every suffering, with filial resignation. It is your Father who afflicts. Cherish the spirit, and you may then use the language of the Saviour: *The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?*

Those who wear the white robes in heaven, *came out of great tribulation. Faint not, when you are rebuked of your Father;* these are the rebukes of infinite wisdom and kindness, intended to invigorate the pulse of devout affection in the heart. *Wherefore, lift up the hands which hang down.* Adore the Wisdom, which has so arranged the events of life, that *all things shall work together for good to them that love God.* Neither *tribulation, nor distress, nor persecution, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Nay, in all these things, we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.* And brethren, if *it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the* CAPTAIN *of their salvation perfect through* SUFFERINGS,—let us never wonder, if WE, *bearing about in our body, the dying of the Lord Jesus—must through* MUCH TRIBULATION *enter into the kingdom of God.*

Let us rather, with the apostle, *glory in tribulations.* For *tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope; and hope maketh not ashamed: For in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God; that he may exalt you in due time. Fear not* trials by the way: *for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.* Fear not death: *for if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you, he that raised Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit, that dwelleth in you.* And when, from the Judgment scene, *they, who have despised reproof and received all their good things in this life,* shall descend to make their everlasting *bed in hell,*—you, who have chosen *rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season,* shall ascend triumphant, to dwell with Abraham, and with Abraham's God and the Lamb, for ever and ever.

THE

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Go....Teach all nations.....*Mat.* xviii. 19.

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SERMON XIII.

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THE DUTY OF FAMILY WORSHIP.

II. Samuel vi. 20.—*Then David returned to bless his household.*

In the life of this great and good man, though we find much to lament, yet we find more to admire and love. Any one who delights to survey the developement of human worth, must be pleased to follow him in his gradual rise from the shepherd's staff to the sceptre of empire.

At the period to which the text refers, his many troubles were gone, and he was the acknowledged king over both Judah and Israel. The surrounding nations, who had long and too successfully invaded the land, had been subdued once and again; so that his name was feared and respected abroad, as well as loved and venerated by his own people.

But, in the height of his renown, David did not forget that he was a husband and a father. On the day alluded to in the text, having blessed the people in the name of the Lord of hosts, we see him, at the proper season, retiring from the midst of admiring thousands *to bless his household*—He offered up prayer, as a husband and a father, in the midst of his family. With this illustrious example before us, our present object will be, to recommend and enforce the duty of Family Worship.

Perhaps there are few subjects that need to be treated with more plainness and tenderness than this. For not only your own welfare, but the welfare of your children and children's children through many generations, may be considered as intimately connected with your attention to this duty.

Let me observe at the commencement, however, that when I urge the duty of worshipping God in the family, I do not mean, simply, asking a blessing from Him at meals. I should be grieved and surprised to know that any one before me needs exhortation on this point:—that any one who even occasionally comes into God's house, should live in such open and avowed forgetfulness of God, as to sit down several times daily, at the table of His bounty, without once acknowledging the hand that feeds every living thing. But, brethren, if you know of any such, to guard you against their example, consider that the word of God respecting them is, "Let their table become a snare before them; and that which should have been for their welfare, let it become a trap." No: when I speak of the duty of worshipping

God in the family, I mean, *assembling them together, and as the first employment in the morning, and the last in the evening, unitedly reading a portion of God's word, and unitedly addressing His throne.* With this explanation, let me now invite your attention,

I. To THE OBLIGATIONS enjoining this service;

II. To THE ADVANTAGES resulting from it.

First; The OBLIGATIONS to family worship. There are certain duties of religion resulting so plainly from the relations we bear to each other, and to our Maker, that they are perhaps not made the subject of *express commandment.* But these duties are often among the most sober and essential parts of Christian obedience: and we find our warrant for them, and our obligation to them, in their manifest connexion with God's glory and our own welfare; in the richest promises of divine mercy; in the most fearful denunciations of divine wrath; and in Scripture examples, recorded with Heaven's approbation and praise. So is it with the duty of *Family Worship.* Of all associations, the first in importance, as well as first in time, is that of the family. In proportion as its relative duties are well discharged, Church and State are safe and prosperous. These duties never will be discharged without the instrumentality of household devotion. But by uniting in daily prayer, members of a family may be made to realize that they have a common Father and God, who is now their Witness, and will hereafter be their common Judge. Indeed so important has this been considered in every age, that the very Heathen themselves had their household Divinities—Gods, whom as families they worshipped, and to whom they daily looked for the blessings, which as families they needed. And if any parent living in a *Christian* land, and believing in the *true* God; and having children growing up around him, whom he has been instrumental in bringing into being, and whose being he *may* be instrumental in making a blessing or a curse to themselves and the world; if such a parent, I say, can habitually neglect the plain duty of leading his children in the worship of the one living and true God;—alas, the example is a most lamentable contrast to that of the Pagan, devoutly, though ignorantly, bowing with his family to an idol of wood or stone. Yes, brethren, the religion of nature, as well as the religion of the Bible, prompts to family worship. There is not a feeling which belongs to us as fathers, which does not plead for this duty: —There is not a relation which we sustain, either to children or servants, but it speaks out, and enjoins—let there be an altar to Heaven, at which the father and head of the family may minister, and call down blessings on those around him.

And while we find not only warrant, but arguments for this duty in every kind feeling of a father's heart, which even the darkness of paganism can not destroy; we at the same time find the Most High adverting to it in language that may well alarm such as have neglected the duty. Says the inspired Prophet, *Pour out thy fury upon the Heathen that know thee*

not, and upon the families that call not on thy name; for they have eaten up Jacob and devoured him, and consumed him, and have made his habitation desolate.

If we advert to history, for examples, we find that in every age there have been wise and holy men, who have felt the importance of this duty, and acted accordingly. Of Abraham we have as God's own testimony, "I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him." Of Moses, the head and lawgiver of Israel, it is said, "He was faithful in all his house as a servant, for the testimony of those things which were to be spoken after." Joshua declared his purpose, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." And Cornelius, the Roman centurion, was chosen to receive the vision which issued in breaking down the wall of partition between God and the Gentile world, with this account of his character and family, "One that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway."

We might also advert to profane history, and mention the names of a Hale, a Walton, a Bacon, and others, famed afar for whatever is wise, and noble, and grand; and yet men who could daily find time to retire from the service of their country, and the allurements of philosophy, and to join with their families, morning and evening, in the humble worship of God. Of such statesmen I could say, as did Sheba's queen, of Solomon, "Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and hear thy wisdom." How pure and blissful the reign of happiness around them; for their dwellings are houses of prayer! But, not to anticipate ourselves, let us next consider,

II. THE BENEFITS RESULTING FROM THE OBSERVANCE OF THIS DUTY.

Among these I might name that *peace of mind* to the head of the family himself, which is the natural consequence of rightly discharging this duty. There is a weight of responsibility, which every reflecting husband, father, and master, will feel deeply, when he considers himself the first and nearest earthly guardian of those around him; and which must fill him with the consciousness, that the Divine guidance and blessing are daily needed by himself and them. Whether all or any of the children in whom his name and interests are to live, when he is gone, are to fall into wretchedness and disgrace, or to rise to happiness and honour, depends on Heaven's guidance. Whether all or any of them are to be swept into an untimely grave, depends on Heaven's care. God alone sees the end from the beginning; and is able to avert every impending evil from them, and to turn them from every sin. And what parent has devoted his children to God, and daily united in commending his family to Heaven's guidance and care, without feeling a peace of heart to spring from the duty, to which the unworshipping father must be a stranger? Wherever business may call you, when you think of *home*, and of the dear immortals that dwell there, is it not an anchor of the soul, to be enabled to reflect, that on the morning when you left them, *you* committed them to the care of Him, whose eye is

in every place, and whose ear is open to every prayer? Or should you leave them unblessed by devotion, and should sudden death or calamity come in among them; would there be no keen anguish added to the smart of Heaven's stroke, when you should reflect that you had not even asked for Heaven's protection? But the benefits of discharging this duty are not confined to the head of the family; they are calculated to affect the head and the members equally.

Family worship is an important *means of religious instruction.* A portion, though it be small, of God's word, read every day in the hearing of a family, will soon make them, in some measure, acquainted with the contents of the Bible. It is by doing a little, and doing it frequently, with seriousness, that our best acquirements are gained. And we may add, that this mode of gaining or giving religious knowledge, although in small portions, yet at frequent intervals, has the advantage of enabling us, if we will, to practice what we hear, and as we hear it. But further—

The discharge of this duty is one most effectual means of *promoting domestic union and peace.* Every family is happy and prosperous about in proportion as each member is disposed to study and act for the good of the whole. But, in almost every household, there are eyes that do not see, and hearts that do not feel alike: and even when wisdom and regularity have done their utmost, there are often little untoward events between parents and children, between masters and servants, that may mar the happiness of all, if they are not wisely controlled, by a spirit of mutual good-will and forbearance. And by no other means can this spirit of union and kindness be so effectually secured as by due attendance on the family altar. Under the influence of the holy flame which burns upon it, the heart has often been softened into a forgetfulness of those little irritations, that, if allowed to remain, would ripen into explosions, separating not only servant from master, and master from servant, but perhaps brother from brother, and parent from child. How must confidence in a parent or master—how must readiness to submit to his will and authority be produced and strengthened in a child or servant, when permitted to bow down with him and unite in supplicating mercies from one common Father and Master in heaven: and how must his heart be guarded against every disposition to oppression, or unkindness when he kneels, and acknowledges their common transgressions before God, and entreats a common forgiveness. It is impossible but that union and peace should be the result of such oft-repeated scenes; and he that will seek thus to consecrate his dwelling, as a temple of peace, will find it so; for *the God of peace will be with him.*

Family worship is also a grand means of *the growth of religion in the heart, and in the Church at large.* It is not so extensively true, that families are what the Church makes them, as that both Church and State are what families make them. Magistrates and ministers of religion were once children in a family; and what they are to be as magistrates and ministers, is often to be determined from what they have gathered from the parent to *whose* examples and precepts they may have at first looked. It is a most *fatal mistake to imagine* that the ordinances of the public sanctuary are

enough of themselves to train up children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." The parent who is thus training them, will be sure to bring them to the sanctuary, that they may enjoy its ordinances.—But the seed lodged in the tender heart by the ministry of the sanctuary, must be watered and nurtured at home, or it will die; and what can water it so effectually as the father's prayers, offered up for all, in their immediate presence?

Religion is so essentially social in its nature, that if we are debarred, during the whole week, from those ordinances, in which heart may kindle heart, we experience a restlessness, and a decay, which the closet can not of itself remedy. Now it is between the devotions of the closet, and the public worship of the sanctuary, that God has ordained the worship of the family—in which all the ties of nature may unite to strengthen the principles of grace; and thus new strength be added daily to our love to God and to each other. And when I contemplate the spectacle of the master and the servant, the parent and the child, and perhaps too the aged grand-parent and the little prattlers, all bending reverently before the God of heaven to seek His favour; and when I know that this scene is repeated every morning before they scatter to the business of the day, and every evening before they retire to rest,—methinks there is something so holy and heavenly in all this, that it must exert a sanctifying influence on old and young who dwell in the happy family. Such a dwelling has in it the ark of the covenant: and *The Lord will bless it and all that pertain to it, because of the ark of the Lord.* The name of God is honoured there, and His blessing will there descend—a blessing on their basket and their store; a blessing on their bodies and their souls; and it shall last from generation to generation. They have the promise, "Our sons shall be as plants grown up in their youth; our daughters as corner stones polished after the similitude of a palace." Such an house stands near to Heaven: On its lintel and the posts of its doors, is the sprinkled blood of the slain lamb; and when angels of wrath are abroad in the land, they see the life-ensuring signal, and they pass by. Angels of light encompass that dwelling, when the darkness of night has covered it: and by night and by day, He who is the angels' Lord and our Brother is there, "the Watchful Shepherd that never slumbers nor sleeps." O that, for our city's sake, our Church's sake, our souls' sake, our children's sake, such a home might henceforth be the dwelling of every one here!

And now, brethren, we affectionately ask, why is this duty not faithfully performed by you all? What is your objection?—what your excuse?

I know I speak to some, who have found the worship of God in their families to be one of their most delightful employments; and who are no strangers to the benefits arising from it. But probably there are others present whose families have never been thus blessed. To such fathers and heads of families I would now make my appeal, and ask, *why is it so? what is your excuse?*

One very common plea is, *the want of ability, suitably and comfortably to discharge the duty.* To this I would reply, that every thing must have a beginning; and if we never attempt any thing, until we feel adequate to

do it well, life from beginning to end would be one unbroken scene of idleness. We never know what we can do, till we try—and especially in duties of religion. The great fault generally is, that we do not venture far enough. In every duty to which God's authority invites us, we have God's promise, that He himself will be our Helper, and will carry us through. And when His providence places you at the head of a family, and his authority calls you to worship Him in the midst of it; venture, trusting His promise to pour out upon you the spirit of grace and supplication; and your heart will be enlarged, and your mouth opened, as sure as there is power and grace in heaven. But, '*we can not trust.*' Ah! this is the secret of all the worst failings that ever overtake the Christian from the beginning to the end of his course on earth. And as I know some do feel this want of ability deeply and painfully, let me suggest to them a remedy, or means of help.

I am opposed to the use of forms in prayer when the individual can with comfort and enlargement address his Maker without them. But I am altogether in favour of using them, rather than that the individual should either not pray at all, or pray with such embarrassment and feebleness, as both to destroy his own comfort, and the edification and profit of those around him. Now you all know there are some excellent forms of prayer, prepared by holy men, adapted also for use in families. These, I would say, it is the duty of every one to use, who can not conduct family devotion profitably without them. And he who will begin in this way, and will aim to gain strength, by using the proper diligence to store his mind with divine promises and petitions, from God's word, will generally find himself, after a time, able to lay aside this aid, and to fulfil the duty, not only to his own joy, but to his own surprise. Most generally, the full heart will ultimately make the fluent tongue. But should a form, from whatever cause, be necessary to the last, let it be used to the last:—for "it is accepted according to that which a man hath, and not according to that which he hath not."—And, granting this aid to all who need it, is there a father before me, who can any longer plead the want of ability to worship God in his family, as an excuse for omitting the duty? Oh, how many have spent hours in reading to their families from the light publications of the day; who yet shrink from even reading a prayer in their presence!

By others *the want of time is urged.*—Their families are large—their business presses them—it is of such a nature that they can not control their hours. Thus they plead that they have not time for a duty, which they confess to be all-important. On this point permit me to remark, that good people do sometimes err, in spending more time in the performance of this service than is wise or dutiful. We may be so long, as to become tedious in our prayers; and whenever this is the case, it creates a weariness, especially in the minds of the young, that is too apt to end in disgust or aversion. But when we urge the duty of allowing no day, in ordinary circumstances, to pass by, without, as a family, spending ten, fifteen, or twenty minutes, in the solemn worship of our Maker; and when the objection made against it, *is the want of time*, we ask, Can men be serious, when they say so? It is *not a little remarkable*, that the illustrious men, whose names are on record

as most faithful in this duty, were occupied with callings, which might seem to furnish the best excuses for omitting it. Moses, bearing all the concerns of Israel's host, on their march from Egypt, yet found time to be "*faithful in all his house.*"—Joshua, a warrior, and, under his banner, leading Israel to the conquest of nation after nation, yet declares his purpose, "*As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*"—Or shall I name one of later day? A greater ornament of the bench, or a more laborious servant of his country, never sat as Judge, than was Sir Matthew Hale. And yet his family worship, morning and evening, was as regular as the rising and setting of the sun. And with the example of such men before us, who sustained the most important interests of States and nations,—shall we, whose duties scarce carry us beyond the immediate concerns of our own persons and families,—shall we say we have no time to worship God in our houses? Brethren, we shall never have time for any thing unless we choose to take it; and we all could find time for this duty, if we had correct views of its importance, and were really desirous of peforming it. For, think but a moment of your plea. No time! Brethren, I ask in God's holy name, what becomes of your time? Spend all that your opportunities will allow you to spend in the pursuit of the world, and gather up its very fragments which you now throw to the winds, and you will have the time I ask for the worship of your Maker.—Save what you now spend in frivolous conversation, or in conversation worse than frivolous,—save what you now spend in unwise and intemperate reproof of your families; and spend that time, and that breath in praying for them and with them; and the sacred duty will be uniformly discharged.

Perhaps, I may be told by some, that they have a different hinderance—they feel the ability and they would make the trial; but *they are opposed in their own families; and to enforce attendance would create a discord, that might defeat the great object of the duty itself.* To this I reply, we do not know that it would create such discord, until we have tried it, and the duty is fairly introduced. And are we to omit the performance of a positive and important duty, because of an apprehended evil, the following of which is at most uncertain, and rather improbable; and at the worst far from a natural result of the duty itself? But, apart from this, God has made you the head of your family; and you are responsible to Him, for the rule of that family, in His fear. At the worst of peradventures then, you are bound to do your duty;—you are not to resign your rule, because some child of disobedience chooses to dispute it. And if in any thing, you would resolutely maintain it, you should do so in serving God. And even should opposition be ever so fixed; be you determined and persevering; and you will see that the most stout-hearted shall find that the arm of the Almighty is above them.

But in this I am supposing and granting one of the greatest of extremes. No—I cannot believe, that there is before me one father, who is cursed with children, so lost to every thing kind in the feelings of nature, so estranged from, and hostile to every thing good and pure in the worship of the true God—so fixed in the seat of the scorner—as either rudely, or obstinately to oppose the wishes of a parent to pray with and for them; to bring down

Having made these remarks to prevent misapprehension, I would now proceed, in a plain Scriptural manner, to illustrate the real nature of this union.

1. In the text and context, the union of believers with Christ is compared to the union of the *branches with the vine.* "I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me, ye can do nothing." "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me." "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." As the branches are united to the vine, and in consequence of that union, receive vegetable life and nourishment; so Christians are united to the Lord Jesus Christ, in such a manner as to receive from him spiritual life and heavenly nourishment. He is the vine—the source, whence they obtain the sanctifying influences of Divine grace. By these influences they are enabled to bring forth the fruits of holiness in their life and conversation. In order to abound in the fruits of holiness, they must abide in Christ—they must live near to him; feel their unceasing dependence upon him; confide in his merits; and daily and devoutly implore new communications of his Spirit. As well may they expect fruit from the branches, when separated from the vine, as look for increase of grace in their own hearts, while departing from Christ. If they do not abide in him, they are like dead branches which can produce no fruit; and which are fit only to be gathered into bundles, and cast into the fire. But if they abide in Christ, they are like living and vigorous branches, and will be enabled to "bring forth much fruit."

2. In the Scriptures the union of believers with Christ is compared to the union of the various parts of *an edifice with the foundation* on which they securely rest.

"Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation." "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house." "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief-corner-stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." As the different parts of a building are connected with each other, and all depend on the foundation for support and strength; so the different members of the Church are connected with each other, and all depend on Christ for spiritual strength. Resting on him as their firm foundation, they constitute a spiritual house, an habitation of God by his Spirit. "Other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

3. The union of believers with Christ is compared to the union of the *human body with the head.*

"For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ; who is head over all things to the Church, which is his body." "Now ye are the body *of Christ,* and members in particular." "Know ye not that your bodies *are the members of Christ?* We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of

his bones." As the various members of the human body are united to the head—are under its influence—and partake of the same sustenance: so true believers are united to Christ as their head; are under the influence of his Spirit; are supported by rich communications of his grace; and are members of his mystical body.

4. This union is compared to that, which, by the marriage covenant, is constituted between *husband and wife.*

"The husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church: and he is the Saviour of the body. Therefore, as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh:—this is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the Church." As the wife is, by the marriage covenant, united to her husband; as, in some respects, "they are no more two, but one flesh;" as they are interested in each other's affections, in each other's property, and in each other's reputation: so true believers, by the covenant of grace, are made one with Christ, the spiritual Bridegroom of the Church. By this union they become interested in his affections, in his glory, and in all the blessings of his kingdom.

5. The union of believers with Christ comprises *similarity of dispositions.*

The "same mind" is in Christians "which was in Christ Jesus." "With open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, they are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." Paul said to the Romans, "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." And again, "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." If the same mind must be in us, that was in Christ Jesus; if we must behold the glory of the Lord, and be changed into his image from glory to glory, by the sanctifying influences of his Holy Spirit, in order to be Christians; if the spirit of Christ must dwell in us, and we must possess the same temper of love to God, and benevolence to men, which he possessed, or be none of his; then true Christians are united to Christ by similarity of disposition.

In Christ, *holiness* is the great principle of moral action. So is it, also, in Christians. This is evinced by the precious fruits of holiness which are visible in their conversation and conduct. To abandon the love and practice of sin; to exercise evangelical repentance; to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; and to render sincere and persevering obedience to the commandments of God; are, evidently, effects of holiness. For "the carnal mind is enmity against God; it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Sinners can not be brought to the exercise of genuine repentance for sin, living faith in Christ, and cordial

obedience to the commands of God, without holiness in their hearts. Their hearts must be renewed and made holy, or they will remain impenitent, unbelieving, and disobedient. Hence Christ said to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born again, he can not see the kingdom of God." And Paul taught, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, that, "without holiness, no man shall see the Lord." Christians, then, are "born again." They are regenerated by the powerful operations of the Holy Ghost. They are made holy in heart and life. Their holiness is perfectly similar in its nature, though vastly inferior in degree, to the holiness of Christ. Being conformed to the moral image of Christ; being holy, in some measure, as he is holy; and having his Spirit dwelling in them; they are actuated by the same principles, and, of course, are united to him in the disposition of their hearts.

6. The union of believers with Christ implies a *fraternal relation*. Christians are united to Christ by adoption of the Father.

By an act of God's free and sovereign grace, he has adopted all penitent and believing sinners into his own family. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs: heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts." "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God." "As many as received Christ, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." In these passages of Scripture we are clearly taught that Christians are God's adopted children. He is their Father, and Christ is their Brother. In consequence of their adoption, Christ calls them his brethren. "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend to my Father, and your Father, and to my God and your God." "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in Heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." Christ and all true believers constitute but one family. Jehovah is their common God and Father. United to Christ by adoption, all real Christians will share with him in the glorious inheritance which God has provided for them in heaven—"an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

7. This union with Christ includes *sameness of interests*.

Christ and believers have one and the same cause at heart. The manifestation of God's glory, and the salvation of perishing sinners, were the great objects which induced the Son of God to come down from heaven, and to take into union with himself the nature of man. These were the *objects which he* constantly sought during his residence on the earth. These *are now the principal* objects of his pursuit, while, enthroned in glory, he is

acting as the Advocate and Intercessor of his people. And these very objects are sought, with supreme solicitude, by all the humble and faithful disciples of Christ. *They* can not be true Christians who have not supreme regard to the glory of God; and to whom the salvation of sinners, and the interests of Christ's spiritual kingdom are not peculiarly precious. These sublime objects are exceedingly precious in the estimation of all consistent Christians. With fervent zeal, and with holy and increasing delight, they labour to advance the Redeemer's kingdom—to save guilty and perishing men—and to extend Jehovah's glory. They love to exalt, and praise, and magnify the Lord their God, and to "worship at his footstool." As in heaven, among angels, and "the spirits of just men made perfect"—so among devout Christians on earth, there is joy over sinners who repent, and turn to God, and "do works meet for repentance." With "joy unspeakable and full of glory," they exult in the prosperity of Zion. Their purest and highest happiness is like the happiness of Christ. Their best friends are the friends of Christ. They have the same enemies to encounter which Christ is successfully opposing. His interests and theirs, in every important respect, are the same. And, by these interests, he and they will for ever remain inseparably united.

8. The union of believers with Christ is produced *by mutual and solemn covenant stipulations.*

It is proposed, by Christ, to sinners, in the precious invitations of the Gospel—"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." "Look unto me, and be ye saved all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." "My oxen and my fatlings are killed; all things are ready; come unto the marriage." "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." In these invitations we are assured that the price of our redemption is paid; that Divine Justice is satisfied; and that a door is opened for the free and full exercise of mercy to all repenting and believing sinners. Here Christ makes a kind and gracious offer of himself, and of all the blessings of heaven, to sinners of every description. He promises that all who will repent of their sins, embrace him in the arms of faith and love, and render holy obedience to the Law and the Gospel, shall receive pardon, and sanctification, and eternal life.

When sinners cordially submit to this plan of salvation—when they abandon their iniquities, and exercise "repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ," they accept and confirm the offered covenant. In this covenant, thus confirmed, they are united to Christ, interested in his merits, and entitled to all the benefits of his mediation.

The union of believers with Christ, which is produced by these covenant transactions, is *the basis of* their title to the blessings of salvation. The

merits of Christ constitute the foundation of their acceptance with God. And they become interested in his merits by the "faith that worketh by love, purifieth the heart, and overcometh the world"—the faith by which they accept of his covenant. All true believers, therefore, are united to Christ in the covenant of grace, and are personally interested in the "exceeding great and precious promises" of the Gospel. Hence "God can be just and yet the Justifier of him who believeth in Jesus."

It appears then, that the union of real Christians with Christ resembles, in some respects, the union of the branches with the vine—of the various parts of an edifice with the foundation—of the different members of the human body with the head—and of the wife with her husband: and that all real Christians are inseparably united to Christ, by the holy disposition of their hearts; by the spirit of adoption; by similarity of interests; and by mutual covenant engagements.

From these considerations we are led to reflect,

1. How great is the benevolence and condescension of God, as exhibited in the plan of redemption by Jesus Christ.

Guilty and hell-deserving as we are, he offers to us the pardon of our sins, and the salvation of our souls. He proposes to us an everlasting covenant of grace: a covenant by which all penitent and believing sinners are admitted to the most endearing and honourable relation to Christ, and, through him, to the infinite Jehovah.

Should a child of infamy and wretchedness be adopted into a family of affluence and reputation, and be treated with the tenderness of an heir, all men would applaud the disinterested condescension of the benefactor. This, however, would be but a very faint representation of Jehovah's condescension, in admitting any of the human race into union with his beloved Son. In the supposed case, it would be only the condescension of one creature to another. But in the gracious act of God to believers, there is the condescension of the Infinite Creator to guilty creatures. By an act of free and sovereign grace, he condescends to receive them into his own family, to call them his children, and to treat them as heirs of his throne and kingdom. He exalts them to a covenant-union with his own Son—the King of glory—the Saviour of Israel.

2. From this subject we may be assisted in deciding the momentous question, whether we are indeed Christians.

We are not Christians unless we are inseparably united to the Lord Jesus Christ. And if we are truly united to Christ, we possess and exercise the same holy dispositions of heart, which he exhibited while dwelling among men: we have the Spirit of adoption; we are pursuing the same interests which he sought; we have abandoned the love and the practice of sin; we have fled, for refuge, from the condemning sentence of Divine Law, to the hope which is set before us in the Gospel; we have accepted of the covenant of grace, and solemnly and sincerely given away ourselves to Christ, as everlasting trophies of his redeeming love. If we are truly united to Christ, *we possess* and exercise that living faith in him, which includes, not only the *assent of the understanding*, but, also, a warm and hearty approbation of

his mediatorial character, and a full reliance on his merits for acceptance with God. If we are inseparably united to Christ, we have something of that heavenly temper of the Lamb, which he so eminently displayed while in this "vale of tears;" we are daily imitating his zeal for the glory of his Father, his kindness and compassion towards men, his humility and meekness, his patience and resignation: And the great and glorious objects which he so zealously pursued while here below; and to which he is still devoted in the Heaven of heavens, will ever call forth our most vigorous and persevering exertions. Carefully examine your own hearts, then, dear brethren, and rest not contented, for a single moment, until you have clear and decisive evidence, that you are united to Christ in that "everlasting covenant" which is "well-ordered in all things and sure."

3. How exceedingly important is it that Christians should walk worthy of their relation to Christ.

It is well known that the conduct of our earthly relatives produces no inconsiderable effect on our reputation. If they conduct well, we share in the honour which they justly acquire. But if their conduct be vicious and infamous, we suffer by the dishonour they bring upon themselves. And the more nearly related they are to us, the more tenderly do we feel the wound which their dishonour inflicts.

So, when as Christians we maintain a near and humble walk with God; when we faithfully and habitually practise the holy religion which we profess; when we exhibit, in our daily conduct and conversation, the virtues which so eminently distinguished the life of our exalted Redeemer: then we reflect honour on Christ and his cause—we adorn the doctrines of the gospel—we produce living testimony to the superlative excellence of the Christian religion. But when we contradict our profession, by unhallowed practice; when we are luke-warm, and careless, and inattentive to the duties of practical piety; when we yield to "covetousness, which is idolatry," and are manifestly more anxious to enjoy the riches, pleasures, and honours of this world, than to secure an inheritance among saints and angels in glory; when our lives are unholy, irreverent, prayerless, or immoral: then Christ is deeply "wounded in the house of his friends;" his laws are violated; his holy religion is dishonoured; and sinners are hardened, and plunged deeper in impenitence and unbelief.

Since, then, the visible glory of Christ, and of his cause, depends so much on the conduct of his professed friends, and since we are admitted to such intimate and honourable union with him; surely we should exhibit the fruits of holiness in our life and conversation. We should remember that we are closely allied to a Being whose honour is infinitely sacred; and that we have espoused the most important cause which ever called for the enterprise and exertion of intelligent creatures. For the honour of our Divine Master, then, as well as for the sake of our own precious souls, and the souls of those around us, we should live in the daily and faithful practice of every Christian duty. We should resolutely surmount every barrier in our way to glory. We should "run, with patience, the race which is set before us." We should "*give all diligence* to make our calling and election sure."

"Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before," we should "press," with holy and increasing ardour, "towards the mark for the prize of the high-calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Finally; Let none forget, that union with the Lord Jesus Christ is of unspeakable importance to all men.

It is absolutely essential to salvation. They, who are not united to Christ, have no interest in his atonement. They are yet under the condemning sentence of the Divine Law. In a spiritual sense, they are "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." They are "without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise; having no hope, and without God in the world." They are "dead in trespasses and sins." This is the deplorable condition of each one in this assembly who is not united to Christ. Let me, affectionately, but faithfully, warn you of your danger. While your affections centre in the pleasures of sin, the riches of this world, or the honour which cometh from man; and while you slight the honour and happiness of a covenant union with Christ, you incessantly expose yourself to the wrath of Heaven!

Christ is now offering you pardon and justification and eternal salvation. He is disclosing the terms on which reconciliation with God may be obtained. He is mercifully waiting for you to accept of those terms, and to receive his rich and sovereign grace. By his own tremendous death he has made atonement for your sins. By the agony of his cross; by his resurrection from the dead; by his ascension to glory; by all the horrours of perdition, and all the glories of Heaven, he now beseeches you to accept of his covenant, and be reconciled to God. If you accept the offered grace, and faithfully consecrate your life to his service, he will receive you to Heaven, "that where he is, there you may be also." He will crown you with "glory and honour." You shall dwell "where is fulness of joy." But if you reject Christ and his great salvation, you must, inevitably, "be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." For God is not a man that he should lie! And O, remember, too, that these benevolent interpositions of the Holy Trinity, if thus rejected, must for ever *aggravate* your ruin;—must become "*a savour of death unto death.*"

Be persuaded, then, to view, with deep concern, your guilt and danger. Forsake the hard "way of transgressors," without a moment's delay. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation." "To-day, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." To-day abandon sin and the powers of darkness: humble yourselves before God; and, by the vigorous exercise of evangelical faith, cordially receive Christ as your Prophet, Priest, and King; and thus ratify, in your own souls, that everlasting covenant which he has *sealed with blood.* So shall you be ever-blooming and ever-fruitful branches *of the Tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God.* AMEN.

THE

NATIONAL PREACHER.

Go....Teach all Nations....*Mat.* xxviii. 19.

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SERMON XV.

PREACHED ON

Occasion of the Death of **MOSES BROWN, ESQ.** One of the Founders of Andover Theological Seminary.

By LEONARD WOODS, D.D.

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DUTIES OF THE RICH.

1 Timothy, vi. 17, 18, 19.—*Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us all things richly to enjoy;* THAT THEY DO GOOD; THAT THEY BE RICH IN GOOD WORKS, READY TO DISTRIBUTE, WILLING TO COMMUNICATE; *laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.*

The duty of those who are rich, to abound in good works, needs to be inculcated at the present day as much as it did in the first age of Christianity. For, although we see many animating proofs of increasing benevolence in the Christian community; still the public benevolence, actually in operation, falls far below what the spirit of our religion and the exigencies of the world imperiously demand. The consequences, which flow from the want of a more general and active benevolence, we have had many occasions to notice, and many reasons to deplore. And if we love the church and the world as we ought, we shall feel ourselves obliged, whenever an opportunity occurs, to use our humble endeavours to promote the reign of benevolence, and to urge upon those who are rich, the duty of devoting their substance to the cause of human happiness.

Such an opportunity is afforded on the present occasion. The example of that friend of man, who has lately closed his eyes in death, will furnish a happy illustration of the principle which I shall aim to establish, and will give weight to the arguments by which I shall endeavour to enforce it. My general position is,

THAT THOSE WHO ARE RICH ARE UNDER SACRED OBLIGATIONS TO DEVOTE A CONSIDERABLE PORTION OF THEIR SUBSTANCE TO THE OBJECTS OF BENEVOLENCE.

I here speak of benevolence in its highest sense;—benevolence excited by motives and directed to objects peculiarly *Christian*. That benevolence which aims at objects of a secular, worldly nature, I cannot now take into consideration. Its claims ought to be exhibited, and will be exhibited, by those who are competent to the task, on various secular occasions. But the cause which I plead, is the cause of *religious* charity; charity exercised to promote the *spiritual* and *eternal* interests of men.

Suffer me here to make three remarks preparatory to my chief design.

1. Nothing in the following discourse is intended to interfere in the least degree with the claims of relative duty. We are obliged, by the law of our nature and by the precepts of revelation, to provide for our own households. This provision should be comfortable and generous, and should doubtless bear some proportion to what we possess.

2. I shall utterly decline any attempt to decide, what proportion of a man's property ought to be devoted to private and domestic uses, and what to charitable objects. I would simply present the general claims of religious charity, and suggest some obvious considerations to enforce them, and then refer the subject to every man's judgment and conscience. So Timothy was required to charge those who were rich, *to do good, to be rich in good works;* but he had no direction from Paul to determine, or to attempt to determine, what should be the amount of any man's charities. He was seriously to inculcate the duty of the rich, and then leave it to them to judge and act for themselves. This is all I shall do.

3. Let it not be supposed that the obligations of benevolence are confined to those who are rich in the highest sense. The word, *rich*, is altogether relative. A man may be rich in comparison with those who have less property than himself, though he is not so in comparison with those who have more. But whatever may be our worldly circumstances, if we are raised above penury, we are under obligation to do good. It is, however, my special object to inculcate this duty upon those who are possessed of the higher degrees of wealth. With these views I remark,

First. The obligation to use property for benevolent purposes, may be proved and enforced from the consideration, *that property is the gift of God.*

So it is represented in the text. "Charge them that are rich,—that they trust not in uncertain riches, but in the living God, *who giveth us all things richly to enjoy.*" The same is taught generally in the holy Scrip-

tures. But can it be necessary to adduce particular arguments, to satisfy you, that whatever worldly substance you possess has been granted you by the divine favour? Thousands of times has it been demonstrated, that no economy or foresight, no degree of skilfulness in our plans, or diligence in our efforts, can secure to us the possession of riches, or even of competence, without the blessing of God. Calamities, which no human care could have prevented, frequently occur, and reduce men from wealth to poverty, or from a state of competence to embarrassment and sufferings. If then you have been successful in your exertions to acquire and preserve property, you owe it to that Almighty Being, who controls the winds, and the seasons, and all the affairs of men. It is his providence that has bestowed it upon you. Be it more or less, it is all *his gift*. And no obligation can be more evident, than our obligation to use a *gift* according to the will of the *giver*. If we should receive a valuable gift from a friend whom we sincerely loved, and if we knew that he had a particular object in view, which he regarded with special favour; should we not feel ourselves bound to use the gift, chiefly at least, for the promotion of that object? To do less than this would betray the want of gratitude and affection. And if the gift were bestowed upon us for the very purpose, and on the condition, that it should be devoted to that special object; we could not use it in any other way without palpable unfaithfulness. These remarks prepare the way for my

Second argument; namely; *God has made it known to be his will, that we should use the property which he intrusts to our care for benevolent purposes.*

He indeed permits and requires us to provide for ourselves and our households. But the precepts of his word constantly urge us beyond this, and present it as a prominent duty of all men, especially of the rich, to give of their substance for the welfare of the church and the world. "*To do good and to communicate forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.*" Here you learn at once, what is the mind of God respecting the use of property. Would you offer a sacrifice which will be pleasing in his sight? then give freely of your substance for the supply of the needy, and the salvation of those who are lost. Again; "Let us do good unto *all* men, especially to them who are of *the household of faith.*" God would have your benevolence expansive and universal; but he would have its holy ardour exercised, *especially*, in advancing the interests of his kingdom. Our Lord himself directs us, to *make to ourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness*; that is, to make such a benevolent, pious use of riches, as to secure the friendship of God and his people. Besides this, he requires us, by general precepts, to devote ourselves and all that

we possess, to him, and to do all things to his glory. Thus clearly has God taught us, what his pleasure is respecting our property. That which he would have us ever keep in view, as the great object to be promoted by the use of our substance, is the good of our fellow-men. Whenever he affords us an opportunity to do good, we are gladly to embrace it; considering that *doing good* is our great work. When he opens the way to send the holy Scriptures or ministers of the gospel to those who are perishing in ignorance and wickedness; or to promote the establishment of benevolent institutions; or the formation and success of benevolent societies; it is obviously his will that we should devote to these objects a portion of the substance which he has given us. This is manifestly required of us by those comprehensive precepts; "*Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*," and, "*Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.*" Just imagine yourselves in the wretched condition of the heathen world, without the light of the gospel, and enslaved to the basest idolatry; and let your consciences and your hearts say, whether it would not be an act of benevolence highly commendable in Christians, to send you the news of salvation, and to afford you the means of being delivered from the deepest ignorance and wretchedness. And if so, how can you neglect to perform the same act of benevolence towards those, who are in that very state of ignorance and wretchedness, and who have no prospect of deliverance, except through the influence of your charity? I here urge the duty on the ground of that divine precept, which requires us *to love our neighbour as ourselves*, and *to do to others as we would that they should do to us*. There is no possibility of evading the force of this obligation. And when we have opportunity to do for others, even the most depraved and miserable, what we soberly think would be the duty of Christians towards *us*, were *we* thus depraved and miserable; if we neglect to do it, we neglect a divine precept; we disobey a mandate of Heaven.

Let it not be forgotten, then, that the duty under consideration, is one which is enjoined upon us, not by human authority, but by the authority of conscience, and of God. Our concern in this respect is altogether with God's spiritual and holy law, and with that inward monitor, which speaks in his name, and with that high tribunal, before which he will summon us to stand.

Suppose the Lord Jesus Christ should now in some special manner come to you, and give you a particular amount of property, and should expressly say to you,—'This property I commit to you in sacred trust with this one direction,—*use it to promote the cause which is dearest to my heart.*' Would you not think yourself happy to be made the steward of his bounty? And could you have a thought of devoting what was thus intrusted to you by your Lord, to any use but to promote his own cause? And could you

have any thing to do but to learn his will, and proceed according to it?—Now the silver and the gold are the Lord's; and to every one who has more or less wealth, he has in fact come, and virtually spoken in the very manner supposed. He has intrusted you with a portion of his property, and has made known his will respecting the uses to which it shall be applied. And no duty can be enforced by arguments more convincing to the understanding, or more touching to the heart, than the duty of using the substance which God has given you, exactly according to his will, and for the promotion of his cause.

Perhaps you may say, this property is *your own*. So far as the institutions and laws of civil society are concerned, it is so indeed. And no man on earth can interfere with the right you have to use it according to your own pleasure. But the God who made us, who has given us our souls and our bodies, our time and our property, comes forward with an authority which no being in the universe can question, and commands us to devote ourselves and all that we possess to *him*. In these circumstances, the proper inquiry is,—*what use of the various gifts which God has bestowed upon us will be most pleasing to him?* What would a supreme affection for him dictate, as to the disposal of our property? What use of it should we think best, if we loved him with all our heart and soul and mind and strength? If that apostle, who was ready to be bound and to die at Jerusalem for the name of Jesus, were here, and possessed this property of ours; what use of it would he think best? And what would be most agreeable to *Him, who, though He was rich, for our sakes became poor?*—The fashion of the world is, to overlook these sacred obligations. Though men are only trustees of the property of God, and are accountable to him, for the use they make of it; they proudly call it their *own;* and devote it to their own selfish ends. How would such proceeding as this be regarded in civil concerns? What would you think of a man, who took an estate he had received of another in trust, and used it as his own, neglecting wholly the object to which the real proprietor meant that it should be applied? But is our obligation to *God* less binding than our obligation to *man?* And can we suppose that we have liberty to take what he has given us, and, regardless of his will, to devote it to our own private use? Oh! that men of every degree of wealth might entertain just conceptions and feelings on this momentous subject. Then the rich man would deem it dishonesty and sacrilege, to dispose of his estate, living or dying, without making the cause of Christ first in his thoughts, and first in his arrangements. Covetousness would cease. All private affections would be made subordinate to Christian benevolence. And it would be as uncommon for a man of any considerable property to make no large contributions or bequests to the cause of the Redeemer, as it is now for a man to make none to his own children. Then the records

of benevolence would exhibit frequent donations and legacies of a thousand, of ten thousand, of a hundred thousand, and, in some instances, most surely, of a million of dollars, for the various purposes of religious charity; and from men of smaller estates, their contributions of ten, of fifty, and of a hundred dollars—no less acceptable to God than the larger offerings of the rich. Then no good institutions would languish, no great and pious undertakings would fail of success, no agents of public benevolence would be disheartened or embarrassed, and no portion of the human family would be left in servitude to idolatry, or error, or any species of vice, for want of pecuniary means. O ye, who are rich, and whose hearts the grace of God has inclined to do good; with what language can I describe the magnitude and glory of that work which you seem destined by divine providence to effect, or the happiness you may enjoy in rising above the grovelling conceptions of worldly men, and presenting yourselves and your possessions as a free-will offering to God. The obligations of men in respect to their worldly substance begin to be better understood and more deeply felt than formerly. But they will unquestionably be understood and felt far more perfectly before that happy day when the knowledge of the Lord shall fill the earth. For we have the best reasons to believe, that the property of the rich is to be one of the grand means of bringing forward the universal reign of IMMANUEL.

My *third* argument is, that *the value of property, when devoted to benevolent objects, is greatly superior to what it can be, when used for any other purposes.*

On this point I appeal directly to your own judgment and feelings. Look, then, at that man, who is favoured with a large estate, but has no ear to hear the cry of distress, and no heart to feel for the miseries of his fellow-men. He loves his *money;* and would rather see a *world* perish, than diminish his hoarded treasures. Behold another, who expends his riches to gratify a taste for fashion and splendour. Behold a third, who employs his property to gain the object of an aspiring ambition; a fourth, who values his wealth as a means of satisfying his animal appetites; and another still, who confines the use of his riches to the gratification of his children. What now is your honest judgment of the real value of riches in the hands of such men as these, compared with the value it acquires in the hands of the *Christian philanthropist*, who, without neglecting any private or domestic obligation, devotes his wealth chiefly to works of benevolence,—to feed the hungry, to encourage the industry of the poor, to instruct the ignorant, and to save those who are perishing in sin? What is the value of property which belongs to the miser, or the

man of fashion, compared with that which belongs to a THORNTON, a BOUDINOT, or an ABBOT? The actual value of property arises altogether from the value of those ends which it is made to promote. Judge then, what is the gratification of that basest of all passions, the passion for hoarding up money; and what is the gratification of animal appetite, or of the love of display, or of promotion; and what is the enriching and aggrandizing of children,—what are any or all of these ends of human pursuit, in point of real importance, compared with those objects which the benevolent man promotes? Let every one who wishes to employ his property so as to give it the highest value, carefully ponder this question. Nothing, I am sure, can prevent forming a correct judgment, but the interference of some unworthy motive. Take pains then to bring your mind into such a state as will best secure you against that interference. For this purpose consider the question as relating not to yourselves, but to others, and to others at a distance.

Suppose a historian should describe a man, who lived a thousand years ago, and in a distant part of the world. He was blessed with large possessions, and a large heart; and he said within himself; 'God has intrusted me with this property; and I am bound to use it according to his pleasure. In the exercise of his infinite goodness, he desires the relief of the distressed, and the salvation of those who are lost. I will therefore take this worldly substance and devote it to the cause of human happiness, which is the cause of God.' And so he actually did. Without disregarding any of his relative obligations, he gave *hundreds of thousands* to works of pious charity. A train of blessed consequences flowed from his wealth,—consequences affecting the temporal and eternal interests of millions; and reaching to the present day. Weigh now the true value of that estate, against another of equal amount, which was devoted to mere private, worldly ends.

Take one more view.—Look forward to a dying bed;—or rather to the *final judgment*, when all men shall give account to God of the use they made of their substance. Then all worldly interests, and the delusion of worldly passions, will be ended, and things, before seen through a mist, will appear in noon-day splendour.—Two individuals, who were prospered in their business in this world, and acquired riches, will then come before the judgment seat. One of them remembered and loved the cause of Christ, and through life made it his great object so to use his estate as to glorify his Redeemer, and promote the good of his kingdom. And when he undertook finally to dispose of his property, he remembered his sacred obligations, and aimed seriously, and with simplicity of heart, to make *such a Will*, as would be pleasing to his SAVIOUR, and would most effectually subserve the same precious cause, to which he had so often contributed. And accordingly, after providing for his own family,

he bequeathed large sums to the most important objects of Christian benevolence. Such is the man whom you will behold at the bar of Christ. Now what will be your judgment, and what will be the judgment of CHRIST, as to the value of an estate, used in such a manner, compared with the estate of another, who forgot the Saviour, and overlooked his cause, and devoted all that he had to private objects? And what will be the judgment, then, of those two individuals? If you yourself were that same benevolent, useful man, before the tribunal of Christ, or if you were that same worldly, selfish man, what would be your judgment, and the feelings of your heart, as to the true value of the two estates?

Fourthly. The duty of using property for purposes of benevolence may be inculcated from the consideration of *the exalted and permanent pleasure it affords to the giver himself.*

Such is the constitution of the mind, and such are the unalterable principles of the divine administration, that our pleasure will be according to the nature of the desires which are gratified. If we gratify desires which are low and selfish; our pleasure will be of the same nature. The miser, the epicure, and the drunkard, all have pleasure; but it is like their depraved, degraded appetites. The man who gratifies those desires which fix upon fashionable refinement and display, or upon personal greatness, or upon the aggrandizement of a family, enjoys a pleasure, which is indeed above the taste of those who are slaves to appetite. But the best that he enjoys can make no approximation to the pure and elevated pleasure of those, who gratify *benevolent* affection. To prove the truth of this representation I appeal to the experience of ages. I appeal to facts which are familiar to every man, who has used his substance for the welfare, especially the *spiritual* welfare of others. Of all the money he has ever expended, *that* has yielded him the highest pleasure, which has been devoted to benevolent objects. Even a *little*, spent in this way, has afforded more happiness than *much*, spent in other ways. On the score of enjoyment, the gratification of all the animal appetites, and of all the selfish desires, and even of the domestic and social affections, falls infinitely below the gratification of *Christian benevolence.* Let those who have not yet known this pleasure break away from the bondage of selfishness, and try what it is *to be benevolent.* Their own bosoms will then testify, what thousands and ten thousands have testified, that the pleasure of *doing good*, is as far above all other pleasures derived from riches, as the heavens are above the earth.

Let me add, that this pleasure, which is so much superior to other pleasures in its nature, is equally superior in *permanence.* Low, selfish gratifications afford no pleasure in review. And generally the momentary

sweetness attending such gratifications is succeeded by the bitterness of remorse. Hence it is, that the lovers of worldly pleasure strive to avoid reflection, and in vain seek relief in new scenes of dissipation. But the man of active benevolence loves to recall past pleasures. And as the recollection is attended with a peaceful conscience, and a new excitement of benevolent feeling, he enjoys his pleasures again and again. Thus he has resources for hours of solitude, and for days and years of adversity, to which all others are strangers. Do you wish, then, so to use your estates, as to secure the most substantial pleasure?—pleasure which you yourselves will pronounce to be the most exalted and permanent? If so, *be benevolent; be rich in good works.* But if you will not seek enjoyment in this way, the poor widow, whose love to Christ prompts her to give away her two mites in charity, is far happier than you with all your riches. Yea, I must tell you more. Your wealth is totally worthless. It is smitten with a curse; and good had it been for you had you never been born.

But those whose hearts are warm with benevolent affection, will find, from experience, that *it is more blessed to give than to receive.* And besides enjoying these present pleasures, they will be rewarded with endless happiness in the world to come. This gracious reward is presented in the text, as a motive to those who are rich, to use their estates in a benevolent and pious manner. "Charge them that are rich in this world, *—that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate.*" Such is their duty. Then follows the gracious reward;—"*laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come;*" that is, a *firm and durable happiness in the future world.*

Fifthly. The benevolent use of property is *the surest and best way of doing good to our children.*

This may seem a paradox to those, who are unaccustomed to sober reflection, and carried along thoughtlessly with the current of the world. But it is in reality a plain and obvious truth, and capable of being proved to the satisfaction of any one, who will allow himself to think. For what is more important to the welfare of our children, than forming them to a right character? And what can we do that will have so powerful an influence upon them in this respect, as to exhibit a right example before them? And how can we exhibit a right example, without habitual compliance with the divine command, *to do good, to be rich in good works?* Let a father, by the proper use of his estate, make an impression upon his children, that he is free from covetousness, and that he aims to please God, and to promote the best interests of his fellow-men; and the im-

pression must have a salutary influence upon their character. They will be powerfully drawn to copy his amiable and useful example; especially as it will be recommended by all the endearments of parental affection. If he can in this way be successful in forming his children to habitual benevolence and piety, he will promote their happiness in the highest sense. For who that truly loves his children, would not rather see them adorned with piety, and *rich towards God*, than possessed of earthly riches? If, then, you would exert this salutary influence upon the character of your children most effectually; let your example be that of distinguished beneficence. Let your benevolence stretch far beyond the common measure. Make unusual sacrifices for the welfare of mankind. Rise to strong, constant, and untiring effort; and so acquire a visible likeness to Him, *who went about doing good*. With such an example before their eyes, your children, you may hope, will early imbibe the spirit and taste the joys of Christian benevolence. And if they do this, their everlasting interests are secure. For under the government of that God who is LOVE, those who have the spirit of love, must be happy. Omnipotence is pledged to guard them from evil, and to gratify their largest desires.

But we may take another view of this point. Has not the experience of ages shown, that inheriting large estates is a most dangerous temptation to children? Is it not found, that the wealth which the fond affection of a father bequeathed to his offspring, often proves the occasion of their disgrace and ruin? And is it not often the case, that if a father could only rise from his grave, and witness the folly and dissipation of his children, and the pernicious purposes to which they devote the property they received from him, he would mourn over his fatal mistake, and over the miseries he had contributed to bring upon those whom he so fondly loved. Let then every affectionate father, possessed of wealth, cherish a wise and faithful regard to the happiness of his own children, and save them from the dangerous temptation to which they would be exposed by inheriting large estates;—a temptation which has not unfrequently proved the destruction of children, who previously gave promise of eminent respectability and usefulness.

But there is still another consideration, which weighs more than all the rest. There is a GOD who judges in the earth; and this GOD has abundantly taught us, in his word, and by his providence, that our good works will bring down blessings upon our children. This is a general principle in the government of God, by which he clearly shows his approbation of benevolence and piety. Now why are we not willing to commit our children to the care and mercy of God? It is indeed our duty to give them a Christian education; to aid them in their entrance into life, and to provide, as far as we are able, for their comfortable subsistence. But is not the blessing of God better than riches? Suppose,

by devoting a portion of our estate to Christ and the church, we diminish their inheritance. Do we not secure to them that prospect of the divine favour, which is infinitely more precious than any earthly inheritance? I cannot but consider the condition of that child pitiable, rather than enviable, to whom an opulent father has bequeathed his *whole estate*. Better, far better would it be for the child, if the greater part of the estate had been given to the LORD, and the residue, with the divine blessing, to him. And I cannot but regard it as the invariable duty of parents to devote a considerable portion of their estate to pious uses, even if their estate is but moderate; and thus to secure the blessing of God upon what remains for their children. Oh! give my children to inherit the *divine blessing*, and I will regard them as rich and happy, however small a portion of this world's goods I may be able to put into their hands.

I now come to my *last* reason for a benevolent and pious use of property; namely, that *it will have a salutary influence upon our own minds*.

Performing works of benevolence is one of the most effectual means of cherishing all the kind and amiable affections. When, from good motives, we give our property for the promotion of benevolent objects, we are likely to have an uncommonly vivid impression of the value of those objects, and to feel an uncommon degree of ardour in our attachment to them. And by the very act of giving, we do something to render that ardour permanent. At the same time, this strong excitement of benevolent affection, and the pleasure attending the gratification of it, will go far towards divorcing the heart from its natural selfishness, and freeing it from every thing which can hinder the complete dominion of love. Observation and experience confirm these remarks. For did you ever know a man, who was always ready to use his property in acts of benevolence, and was fruitful in good works, who did not exhibit a pleasing growth of all the virtuous and holy dispositions of the heart? Nor is it difficult to account for it, that the benevolent use of property should produce this effect. The acquisition and the selfish appropriation of wealth has a tendency to strengthen all our earthly passions, and so to exclude God and eternity from our minds. Now if Christians will take a part of that, which has been the nutriment of their selfish passions, and has withdrawn their hearts from God, and will devote it to his honour and the good of his church; they will directly counteract the spirit of covetousness. At the same time they will bring themselves into contact with higher and nobler objects, kindle purer affections, and taste purer joys. Christians, who hold large estates, seldom attain to eminent piety; and, for the most part, they are destitute of those elevated enjoyments in religion, which are so often granted to others. They are

frequently sensible of this, and are frequently heard to complain, that they have no fervour of piety, and no spiritual comfort; that their souls cleave to the dust; that they cannot enjoy holy communion with God, and cannot find any satisfactory evidence of their title to heaven. Let such Christians inquire, whether there is not a cause for this low and comfortless state? Have you not too much of this world's riches; and do you not hold it with too strong a grasp? Does not the burden of your estate bear too heavily upon you? Your march to the heavenly world is all the way ascending. In this upward motion, are you not overloaded? Lay aside this oppressive weight; relieve yourselves from this grievous load, and you will make better progress. Diminish your *earthly* treasures, and increase your *heavenly*. Give freely for the spread of the gospel and the salvation of the world; and continue this good work of *giving*, till your property is so reduced, that you will no longer feel it to be a burden to your souls.

The principle I have now advanced is no invention of mine. It is what we find in the word of God. We are there pointed to a young man, who could not enter into the kingdom of heaven, *because he was rich*. And the means which Christ directed him to use to avoid destruction, was, *that he should give away his estate for benevolent and pious uses*. The same is implied in the words of my text. "Charge them that are rich in this world—that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, *laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come*." In this way the poison is extracted from riches; the curse is removed; and that which is so generally the occasion of mischief, is turned into a blessing.

If you would have a farther illustration of the views which have been exhibited on this subject; turn your attention to what meets you in the Christian world at the present day. For notwithstanding the lamentations which are frequently poured forth over the low and languishing piety of the churches, and the want of zeal in individual Christians,—lamentations which have indeed too just a cause; I must still think, that a prominent characteristic of the community, to a great extent, is, a *more correct judgment of the real value of property, and a greater readiness to part with it for benevolent purposes*. And just in the proportion in which this is the case, there is manifestly a deeper feeling on religious subjects,—stronger affection, and stronger consolation. If you would find Christians who are alive to God, fervent in prayer, and cheerful and constant and happy in their obedience; go to those who are ready to contribute to every benevolent object, and who are never weary of doing good. Go to those,—and they may easily be found at the present day, —whose living motive to diligence, economy, and self-denial, manifestly

is, that they may obtain the means, not of pleasing themselves, but of relieving the distresses and saving the souls of their fellow-men.

On the present occasion, brethren, you have doubtless often turned your thoughts to *our departed friend*, as one who exemplified that Christian benevolence, which I have endeavoured to inculcate. He did indeed exemplify it, and, compared with most of his contemporaries, in a remarkable degree. I well know that the community, so far as they have proper information, will confirm the truth of what I say. And I am persuaded, they generally have such a sentiment on this subject, that they will not easily be satisfied, unless some public testimony is given to the benevolence, the usefulness, and the piety of that beloved man, whose death has filled so many hearts with sorrow.—The name of Moses Brown cannot be pronounced, and, for these forty years, has not been pronounced, without respect and love. I might here delightfully expatiate upon the many estimable traits of his character. I might say, that for more than half a century, in which he was engaged in acquiring and using property, his reputation for integrity and honour was unsullied; that it was his uniform principle, to seek no advantage to himself, which would prove injurious to his neighbour; that he neither countenanced vice, nor neglected, on suitable occasions, to reprove it; that he was eminently a peace-maker, exercising, with singular success, the spirit of conciliation. I might speak of the sweetness of his temper; of the control he maintained over his passions; of his sincerity as a friend; of his attractive and generous hospitality; and of the happy combination he possessed of the domestic virtues. I might say, that through a long life he manifested a lively interest in whatever concerned the welfare of society, of the church, and of the world; that while he was raised, by his wealth, and the worth of his character, to hold so respectable a place in society, he was totally averse to splendour and show; that he scrupulously avoided all needless expense, and set an example of plainness and economy, which, if generally copied by the rich, would save enough to rescue ten thousand families from distress, and to send the gospel to all the nations of the earth. But on these attributes of his character I can not enlarge. I had a particular object in view, and to that I shall chiefly confine my remarks.

Moses Brown was born in Newbury, Oct. 2, 1742. By unceasing diligence, and the exercise of uncommon judgment and forethought, with the blessing of divine providence, he rose from small beginnings to the possession of a large estate. But he was not, like most other successful merchants, so immersed in his worldly business and cares, and so occupied with his schemes for the acquisition of wealth, as to be neglectful of the wants and sufferings of the poor. He remembered what

it was o be poor; and through all the years of his prosperity, he cherished a tender and generous sympathy for those who were placed in that condition from which divine providence had raised him up. Many a time did he, from the mere kindness of his heart, exercise a forbearance towards his debtors, which occasioned him the loss of what was justly his due. And many a time, especially in the latter part of his life, did he relinquish valuable claims upon individuals, not because they had nothing to pay him, but because they could not pay him without reducing themselves to straits.

It would be impossible to record the various forms and instances of his kindness to families and individuals in want. The benevolent actions, to which I now refer, are known in a measure to those among whom he lived. But they are fully known to God only. And I trust, that when they are brought to view from the records of Omniscience, our departed friend will recollect, with holy thanksgiving, that divine grace which excited him to perform them, and will know the glorious import of what the God of mercy hath said: ***Blessed is he that considereth the poor.***

But these charities to the poor did not satisfy the heart of this friend of man. He did not follow the steps of those rich men, who engage a little in the more private details of charity, and there stop. His having devoted so much of his substance to the ordinary objects of charity, seems evidently to have had an influence to enlarge his heart, and to prepare him to contribute to higher and nobler objects.

My lot, as a minister of the Gospel, was cast seven miles from his residence. In compliance with a particular request, I had the pleasure of meeting him, together with another friend, now living, and one more, now I trust in heaven, to consult respecting the establishment of a Theological Seminary. It was twenty years ago. The subject of a Theological Institution was then new to us, and new to the public. The conversation of that happy evening will be one of the last things to fade from my memory. But it was not conversation merely. The honoured friends of whom I speak, were not men of *words*, but of *business*. And, feeling their obligations to God, who had given them their estates, they then entered on the plan of founding a *Seminary for the education of pious youth for the Ministry*. And that dear man, who is now silent in death, freely offered his *ten thousand dollars* for this momentous object. For though he was a man of but ordinary education, and had been incessantly engaged, from early life, first in mechanical, and then in mercantile labours, and though he had never thought himself worthy to be numbered with the followers of Christ; he had a mind large enough to understand the importance and necessity of such an establishment, and a heart to give liberally of his honest treasures to promote it. That time

appears like yesterday. Every word, and look, and tone of voice is fresh in my recollection. The readiness, the simplicity, the generous kindness, with which our departed friend offered his aid, cannot be described; though, by those who knew him, it may easily be conceived. He merely said, *It is a great object; I will give ten thousand dollars to begin with; and more afterwards.* He redeemed his pledge; for he was always a nursing father to the Seminary, and after various smaller donations, and one of a thousand dollars, he gave, a few years since, *twenty-five thousand dollars* to found a new Professorship. Besides all this, he promoted, by generous contributions, the various religious charities of the day. And it was a remarkable trait of his character, distinguishing him from most others, that even after he came to be an old man, he could readily enter into any new plans of benevolence, however different they might be from those to which he had been accustomed. Such was THE AMERICAN EDUCATION SOCIETY, which he regarded from the beginning, as a worthy object of his patronage, and to which, at the commencement of his last sickness, he contributed *a thousand dollars* to found a permanent scholarship. Such too was THE AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR THE PROMOTION OF TEMPERANCE; the formation of which he welcomed, with all his heart; as it coincided perfectly with his own settled principles and habits, and the sober results of long observation. To this Society he made a donation of *five hundred dollars*. He previously contributed *five hundred dollars* for the benefit of GREENVILLE COLLEGE, Tennessee; and *fifteen hundred* to the town of Newburyport, when it was visited with a destructive fire. By his last Will he bequeathed *six thousand dollars* to be kept as an increasing fund, till it should be adequate to the perpetual support of a public Grammar School in Newburyport; and *one thousand dollars* to THE HOWARD BENEVOLENT SOCIETY.

You perceive that our honoured friend did not copy the example of some rich men, who retain all their property with an iron grasp, as long as life remains, and then, by Will, give away something, because they can hold it no longer themselves. He made a liberal use of his estate while he lived,—while in health,—while engaged in business,—and while capable of enjoying the satisfaction of seeing the good resulting from his charities.

But the crowning excellence of his character was *religious principle.* His humility, and devotion, and conscientious regard to duty, were manifested by his life. He loved the strictness of evangelical truth, the holy doctrines of revelation. Never was there a man who seemed to think less of himself: who was farther from making any claims upon the divine favour, or indulging any hopes of heaven on the ground of his good works,—though few men ever had more of these than he. But they were all of no account with him in the affair of justification before God. In this

respect he regarded them as of no value, and looked for salvation, where every child of Adam must look,—to the *Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world;* and trusted wholly in His atoning blood for forgiveness and eternal life. His character had long been such, that the Christian community would have rejoiced to welcome him to the Lord's table. But from this he was deterred by his extreme self-distrust, and by his impression, which was probably not altogether correct, of the nature of the Ordinance, and of the necessary qualifications of those who ought to be admitted to enjoy it. But the heavy afflictions, with which it pleased God to visit him a few years since, in the death of his amiable partner, and his only child, and to which he bowed with silent meekness and submission,—were evidently the means of producing greater decision and maturity of Christian character, and preparing him for greater enjoyments. In consequence of this he was induced to unite himself with the church of Christ by a public profession. I am free to express my wish that he had done it long before, and my sober conviction, that he committed a serious mistake in neglecting it, and that he thus deprived himself of some of the best means of growing in grace, and preparing for the presence of Christ in heaven.

And now, brethren, when we review the whole subject, and fix our eyes on the character of the beloved man who has lately been removed from us to another world; we cannot but be impressed with the littleness and insignificance of wealth, devoted to selfish, wordly purposes. Oh! it is all nothing-worth—base—contemptible; as the death-bed and the day of judgment will show. We honour the poor man, who cheerfully gives a few shillings to promote the cause of his SAVIOUR. But the man who possesses riches, and who lives and dies, in an age like this, without giving any considerable portion to benevolent and pious objects, has no honour from GOD, and deserves none from man. He sinks himself, and his name, and all his riches, into utter contempt. And though he may leave a large estate to his heirs, he leaves no blessing of God with it. But blessed, for ever blessed, are they, whose hearts are warmed with divine love, and who cheerfully devote their substance and themselves to the glory of GOD.

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SERMON XVI.

By Rev. JUSTIN EDWARDS,

ANDOVER, MASSACHUSETTS.

THE GREAT CHANGE.

II. Cor. v. 17.—*If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.*

It is not uncommon for men, in the darkness of apostacy from God, to imagine that there is no great difference of character between saints and sinners: that since Jesus Christ has died, and the Holy Ghost been sent down from Heaven, men can become interested in the blessings of salvation without experiencing any great moral change. But the testimony of God is, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new."

What does this mean? In a plain scriptural manner to answer this question, will be my object in this discourse.

I. If any man be in Christ he has a *new God.*

Such is the nature of the human soul that it must have a God; an object of supreme affection. It cannot exist in the rational exercise of all its powers without loving some object supremely. This, in the language of the Bible, is its God. And the character of the soul is determined by the character of its God.

Before the apostacy, man loved Jehovah supremely. But Satan, the father of lies, came into Eden, and told our first parents, that if they would eat of the fruit which God had forbidden, *they* should be as gods. He did not say that this would glorify Jehovah, or benefit

their posterity; but he said that it would exalt themselves. Self, as an object of supreme regard, was now brought distinctly before them: And out of supreme regard to themselves, they disobeyed God:—they *took of the fruit and did eat:* And men *out of Christ*, have regarded themselves supremely ever since. But if any man be *in Christ*, he is, in this respect, a *new creature.* He no longer regards himself supremely, but Jehovah. He has the same God that Adam had before his apostacy. Mark the change when man apostatized. Before, he loved Jehovah supremely: after, himself. Mark the change when a man becomes a new creature. Before, he loves himself supremely: after, Jehovah. Great change: from loving supremely the creature, to loving supremely the Creator. He has a new God.

II. He has a *new object of pursuit.*

It is a fundamental principle of human action, that every man will seek to please his own God. The man who is in Christ, having changed his God, changes of course his object of pursuit. Before, his object was to exalt and gratify himself. Now, his object is to please and glorify Jehovah. The man may continue in the same worldly employment, if a lawful one, in which he was before; and he may do many of the same things, with his hands, which he did before: but he has in view a totally different *object;*—not his own exaltation, but the glory of God, and the spiritual, eternal happiness of men. God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined into his heart, and given him the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. He is not his own, he is bought with a price; and his feelings respond to his duty;—glorify God, in body and spirit which are His. Whether he eats or drinks, or whatever he does, his grand, ruling object is, to do all to the glory of God. Hence,

III. He adopts a *new rule of action.*

It is another law of human action, that every man will adopt such a rule as he thinks will accomplish his object. The man who is in Christ, having changed his grand object of pursuit, changes, of course, his rule of action. Before, his rule was to do those things, and those only, which he thought would elevate himself; or in some way promote his own advantage. Now, his rule is to do those things, and those only, which God declares will glorify Him, and promote the happiness of

His holy kingdom. His own will was the rule of action before; now, the revealed will of God. And when his own will comes into competition with the will of God, his language is, Not my will, but *thine* be done. This is the habitual desire of his heart. And he exhibits it, not in words only, but in actions. For,

IV. He lives a *new life*:—a life of faith on the Son of God, who loved him, and gave Himself for him.

This faith is that confidence in Christ, which leads the man to *feel* that what He hath said is true; and to *treat* it as true. Hence he looks principally, not at things seen and temporal; but at things unseen and eternal. He lays up his treasure, not on the earth, but in Heaven; and seeks those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. The love of Christ constrains him to live, not unto himself, but unto Him that died for him and rose again. I do not mean by this that he is perfectly holy. He still commits sin; but he loathes himself on account of it, and repents as in dust and ashes. He will not continue to indulge in what he knows to be sin; nor will he continue to neglect what he knows to be duty. He seeks by prayer and supplication to know what duty is; and he listens to the voice of God in revelation, that he may understand, for the purpose of *doing* it: and, so far as he knows, he has respect to *all* His commandments.

This obedience to the divine commands, springs from *new views*, and is prompted by *new feelings*. These views and feelings, as the grand spring of outward obedience, I shall briefly illustrate with regard to five particulars, viz. *God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Ghost, himself, and his fellow men.*

He has new views and feelings with regard to God. Before, he never saw any peculiar beauty, excellence, and glory in the character of God; especially in his holiness, justice, and truth. He never saw any reason why he should love God, any farther than he thought that God loved him; and would ultimately favour *his* cause. His soul *never* was chained by the splendours of the Eternal throne; nor was it ever enraptured with the beauty of the holiness of Him that sits upon it. He never had such views of the glory of God, as to be changed into His image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.

But now he sees a beauty, a loveliness, an excellence, and a glory in God, surpassing the lustre of all creation. Not that the man has become blind to created glories: he loves his friends, and all his fellow men, more than he ever loved them before; and with a more pure and exalted affection. If any of them are holy, he sees a beauty and excellence in their character, which he never saw before; and he delights in it. But when he looks on God, though at a distance, and through a glass darkly, created excellence *dies*. The glories even of Gabriel, and of all created intelligences, are swallowed up and lost in the overflowing glories of the Godhead; and he cries, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon the earth that I desire beside thee."

Before, he had no *confidence* in God. When disappointed in his favourite plans,—when his dearest earthly prospects were blasted,—it gave him no comfort to think, that *God* had done it. Now, though the fig-tree should not blossom, and there be no fruit in the vine; the labour of the olive fail, and the fields yield no meat; though the flocks be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stall; he will rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of his salvation.

He did not, before, feel *safe* in God's hands. When his conscience was awakened, and he was led to feel his guilt; and also to feel that all his interests for time and eternity were in the hands of God, and at His disposal, he was distressed. Now, he wishes to be no where else. He surrenders himself, his friends, and all his interests, for both worlds, into the hands of God, and chooses to have them for ever at His disposal. So long as he can say, "The Lord reigneth," he will add, "Let earth rejoice." And the more deeply he feels that His kingdom extends over all, the greater his joy, till it becomes unspeakable, and full of glory.

He may have thought, before, that God was a respecter of persons, and been ready, at times, to charge Him with partiality. He may have lived in a place, visited by the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit; may have seen his friends and acquaintances awakened from the slumbers of moral death; and brought out of darkness into marvellous light. He may have seen their joy, and heard their songs; while *he*, after long, distressing anxiety, and many tears, may have been still in darkness and the shadow of death; groaning in dismal horrors of conscience, and fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation;

under a load of guilt, which was pressing him downward toward eternal despair. In this situation, he may have thought that God was hard, partial, a respecter of persons; and been almost ready to curse his God and King, and look upward. But the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, breaks in upon him, and he cries, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and of earth: Even so, Father, for so it hath seemed good in thy sight—Bless the Lord in all places of his dominion: Bless the Lord, O my soul."

He has new views and feelings with regard to the Lord Jesus Christ. He may have viewed Jesus Christ as an excellent character, before; and made mention of Him in his prayers, when he prayed. And he did, perhaps, sometimes pray;—in a thunder-storm, when the lightning blazed around him; or in time of sickness, when he stood over the bed of his dying friend; or when, at midnight, he anticipated his own death, and the coming judgment. When he felt in danger, when death and eternity seemed to be nigh, he attempted to pray; and he not unfrequently made mention of the name of Christ; but he had no view of His divine, transcendent glory. He saw no reason why angels should veil their faces, cast down their crowns, fall prostrate, and worship Him. Perhaps he thought him to be only a man; or at most an exalted creature. But he is now the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of peace. He is the Alpha and Omega; the Beginning and the End, which is, and was, and is to come, the Almighty. He is over all, God blessed for ever. He is also partaker of human nature; and can be touched with the feeling of human infirmity. He is the Propitiation for sins;—for *our* sins, and for the sins of the whole world. He is the End of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. He is an Advocate with the Father, the believer's *Life*. Take away his Divine Saviour,—you take away his only hope. He has no access to God; no deliverer from sin; no Saviour from perdition. In the agony of guilt, he sees no way in which God can be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly.

But the glories of Immanuel break forth on Calvary, with a brightness which puts out the sun; and in that light, he sees that God *can* be just, and yet the justifier of every one that believeth. And in view of the length, and the breadth, and the height of that love which passeth knowledge, he feels that He *will* do it; and he sings, Alleluia, salvation, and honour, and glory to the Lord our God. Such an High

Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, higher than the heavens, and able to save unto the uttermost all who come unto God by Him: This is all my salvation, and all my desire.

He has new views and feelings with regard to the Holy Ghost. He had probably heard that there was a Holy Ghost, before; but, perhaps, he did not believe it. Or if he did believe it, he knew next to nothing about Him. He never felt in perishing need of the Holy Ghost. He felt as if he could pray, and give to the poor, keep the Sabbath, pay his honest debts, and do many other things, in a manner *acceptable to God*, without the influences of the Holy Ghost. But he now feels that without Him he shall do nothing acceptable; and rejoices that God will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him. He knows by experience what this means, "The Spirit helpeth our infirmities." And he knows what this means, "God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." The man who is in Christ feels deeply his need, not only of a Redeemer, but a *Sanctifier;* One who can enlighten his understanding, purify and elevate his affections, and prepare him to be presented spotless and faultless before the throne of Divine glory, with exceeding and everlasting joy. He has already experienced of the exceeding greatness of His power, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead. Had it not been for the Holy Ghost, he had been to this day impenitent, unbelieving, dead in trespasses and sins; going downward toward eternal death. He knows this, he *feels* it, and in the feelings of his heart cries, To Him be the glory. God, he says, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts. God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ. We are His workmanship, created anew, in Christ Jesus, unto good works.

He has new views and feelings with regard to himself. Before, he thought himself to be as good as others;—as good, at heart, as many professors of religion; and vastly better than some. When he compared himself with other men, as he often did, especially with some professors of religion, he felt himself to be almost good enough. Instead of crying, God be merciful to me a sinner; he felt more like saying, I thank thee that I am not as other men. He had no idea that *his*

heart was deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. He thought that he was rich, increased in goods, and had need of nothing; not that he was poor, miserable, blind, naked, and in want of all things. When told of his character and condition, by some faithful minister, or some Christian friend, he did not believe them. All these things, he was ready to say, have I kept from my youth up: What lack I?

But his views are now totally changed. He sees that he has been violating the first commandment, through his whole course of moral action:—he has had another God before Jehovah,—and been serving the creature, not the Creator. He has sought his own glory, above the glory of God and all the happiness of His kingdom. Never has he such views of the desperate wickedness of the human heart, as when, with fixed eye, he gazes on himself. He has been regardless of the Saviour, deaf to the calls of mercy, and trampling on dying love. O, he is vile, and has nothing to answer. His very soul is stained with guilt, which nothing but the blood of Christ can wash away. Now he sees, why Jesus must enter the holy place with His *blood;* and begins to feel the worth of a Saviour. Now, too, he feels his need of a Sanctifier, who can create in him a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within him; who, though his sins are indeed as scarlet, and as crimson, can make them white as snow. And while he finds that in himself dwells no good thing, and cries, in anguish of spirit, Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? he is enabled, through grace, to add, Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. I live, yet not I; but Christ liveth in me: and, by the grace of God, I am what I am.

He has new views and feelings with regard to his fellow-men. Once he looked on them with a great degree of indifference; unless they were, in some way, particularly connected with *him.* The consequence was, he would do little, except for himself, his relatives, or particular friends. And he would do little for them, except for the body, or for this world. His soul was bounded, on every side, by the narrow limits of *self*, and of *time.*

Now, he rises, and looks over the whole family of man. He views each one that passes before his mind, with deep emotion, and ardently longs for his *eternal* good. His eye fastens on the *soul;* he follows it on to the judgment, and onward still, while it expands in endless being;

and he feels that it is worth a thousand worlds: it lives when worlds expire, and lives to sing—or weep for ever. Hence you may see him laying out plans for doing good hundreds and thousands of years to come; and to the whole empire of Jehovah. Bursting out from the limits of self, and of time, his love, like the light of heaven, pours forth on creation, and settles upon every object that is able to receive it: it goes onward into eternity, and onward—and too divine to spend itself on creatures, it rises up to God,—and, kindled anew by the glories of the Godhead, shines brighter and brighter for ever. Show him the will of God, and you govern him to all eternity; and his grand object at every step will be, to become more and more *like* God. The consequence is,

V. The man who is in Christ has *new joys*. His joys are as much more pure, expansive, and exalted, as are his views, affections, and efforts. Once, he rejoiced in himself, and in this world. His joys rose or fell, as he thought himself and his connexions to be, for this world, exalted, or depressed.

Now, he rejoices in hope of the glory of God, and in the rising prospects of Immanuel's kingdom. Hence he loves the Bible in which these prospects are unfolded. He makes it the man of his counsel, his daily companion, and he reads it with great delight; especially the promises made to Zion. As he reads, the prospect brightens; he gazes with new delight, and is borne along till he sees the wilderness bud and blossom; hears songs of deliverance in the desert, and praises of salvation from every land, to God and his Christ. And as he gazes, and wonders, and adores, he is borne onward till he sees a multitude that no man can number, coming up in glorified bodies, like the body of Jesus Christ;—he sees them ascending, and catches their alleluias, as they enter heaven and bow with rapture before Him that loved them and gave himself for them. And,

VI. He has *new hopes*. He hopes soon to be among them, and to make one in that great congregation.

I do not mean by this, that he had no hope in days of impenitence and unbelief. He *had* a hope. But what good did it do him? It did not purify his soul. It did not wean him from the world. It did not make him like Christ; nor did it fit him for the employments or the joys of heaven. Had he died with only that hope, he would have been, to-day, in hopeless despair.

Now, he has a *good* hope. It arises from having the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost. It weans him from the world, quickens him in duty, and leads him to have respect to all God's commandments. It leads him to be humble, to abhor himself, to hunger and thirst after righteousness, to have his heart and conversation in heaven, and to "purify himself, even as God is pure."

Nor will this hope, like that of the wicked, perish at the giving up of the ghost. No, it will be an anchor sure and steadfast, entering into that within the veil; and it will not fail, till it is swallowed up in cloudless, and eternal vision. Even now, he is borne in everlasting arms; angels minister unto him; all things work together for his good, and help to increase that exceeding and eternal weight of glory. And when absent from the body, he is present with the Lord—he sees Him as he is—he is *like* Him, and mingles with that multitude which no man can number, in their anthem of glory to Him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever.

In view of what has been suggested, I remark,

1. That the man who is in Christ has experienced a *great* change.

If he has a *new God*, a *new object of pursuit*, a *new rule of action*, and lives a *new life*,—a life of obedience to God; if his outward actions spring from *new views* and *feelings* with regard to *God*, to *Jesus Christ*, to the *Holy Ghost*, to *himself*, and his *fellow men;* if these views and feelings lead him to have respect to *all* God's commandments; and thus give him *new joys*, and *new hopes*,—hopes, well founded, of dwelling eternally with God, and being in heart, perfectly like Him,—then surely he has experienced a *great* change. The Holy Ghost did not say too much, when in describing it He said, "born again"—"created anew"—"brought out of darkness into marvellous light"—"passed from death unto life."

2. If he who is in Christ has experienced this *great* change, then there is a *great* difference between the man who is in Christ, and the man who is out of Christ; or, in other words, between a saint and a sinner.

If men can bring themselves to believe that there is no great difference of character between saints and sinners *here*, then they hope that there will be no great difference of condition between them *hereafter*. But such a hope is *vain*. Say ye, saith God, to the righteous, It shall be well with him. But, wo unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him. The difference of character is so great between them, in this world, as to fit them for that great and eternal difference of condition in the world to come.

The gods they serve are of totally different characters. The God of the saint, is as different from the god of the sinner, as the Holy One of Israel is from a sinful dying man. This makes a great difference between their own characters, in this world; and it must make a great and eternal difference between their conditions in the world to come. Jehovah requires the *heart*. If this is withheld, he is robbed of *every* thing. And should any one continue to withhold his heart from God, and give it to other objects, he will depart accursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels;—he will be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.

Fellow-mortal, hastening to the judgment; have *you* become *a new creature?* I do not ask you when, nor where, nor how; but have you *ever* become a new creature? Have you chosen Jehovah, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, for your God? Is it your great object to *glorify Him?* and is His revealed will your *rule of action?* Do you have respect to *all* his commandments, for the sake of glorifying Him, and doing good; trusting in Jesus Christ for what you need, to do this, and to be accepted in it? Do you *love* Jesus Christ; and contemplate with joy the rising prospects of His holy kingdom? Will you spend, and be spent in promoting his glory; in extending the honour of His name; and living not unto yourself, but unto Him that died for you and rose again? If so, you may hope that you are a new creature. And if a new creature, immortal glories await you. All things are yours; life, death, things present, things to come, all are yours. You are borne in everlasting arms; and when you put off the body, angels attend you—the gate of heaven opens—and multitudes that no man can number, shout your arrival. You are then with Christ, and see the glory which he had with the Father before the world was. You veil your face, cast down your crown, and, with saints and angels in heaven, cry, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.

But where is he who is not a new creature, when *he* dies?—Sinking, and sinking, downward, and still farther downward, in the bottomless pit, for ever and ever! His heart can not endure—his hand can not be strong; for who can dwell with devouring fire? who *can* inherit everlasting burnings?

End of Vol. I.

THE

NATIONAL PREACHER:

OR ORIGINAL

MONTHLY SERMONS

FROM

LIVING MINISTERS.

EDITED BY

AUSTIN DICKINSON, A.M.

NEW-YORK.

"Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord."—1 *Cor.* xii. 4, 5.

"In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."—*Rev.* xxii. 2.

VOL. II.

FOR THE YEAR COMMENCING JUNE 1827

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1827–8.

Southern District of New-York, ss.

BE it remembered, that on the 22d day of May, A. D. 1826, in the 50th year of the Independence of the United States of America, Austin Dickinson, of said District, hath deposited in (L. S.) this office the title of a Book, or Periodical Work, the right whereof he claims as Editor and Proprietor, in the words following, to wit:

"The National Preacher: or Monthly Sermons from Living Ministers; Edited by Rev. Austin Dickinson, New-York."

In conformity to the Act of Congress of the United States, entitled "An Act for the encouragement of Learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts, and Books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the time therein mentioned." And also to an Act, entitled "An Act, supplementary to an Act, entitled an Act for the encouragement of Learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts, and Books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned, and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving, and etching historical and other prints."

JAMES DILL,
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PREFACE TO VOLUME II.

Of the Numbers of this Volume, from ten to fifteen thousand have been published monthly, according as the nature of the subjects and the exigencies of the times seemed to render an increased circulation desirable. Most gladly would the Editor have supplied a portion of the Volume from some others, whose early co-operation was expected. But we yield to the arrangements of Providence, and hope for the more from them hereafter. In obtaining and preparing Sermons, it has been, and will continue to be, the wish of the Editor, to bring forth all those great truths, which God is wont to bless in the conversion of souls, and the upbuilding of his holy kingdom; and to give them such degrees of prominence as they seem to occupy in the Sacred Volume. He can never be unmindful of his responsibility, in being thus permitted to deal out the bread of life to increasing thousands; or of the woes that must accumulate, if he designedly keep back any thing that might be "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, or for instruction in righteousness." It will be always desirable, however, that in this work doctrines should be urged *practically*, and practice *doctrinally;* in such language as He used, whom "the common people heard gladly."

In looking over the pages of this Volume, the self-righteous moralist will never say with truth, that his depravity has not been demonstrated: the delaying sinner can never say, he has not been shown the utter unreasonableness and danger of his procrastination: the ungrateful caviller can never say, that salvation is not freely offered; and wilfully rejected by the perishing; or that God, as a Sovereign, is not righteous and glorious as well as merciful, in humbling the proud, and in subduing the obstinacy of some, while he leaves others to

perish in their wilful rebellion. Nor can the Christian backslider forget, that he has been summoned to repent, and do his first works, and be a reprover of the ungodly. Nor can the timid and wavering professor fail to acknowledge, that evangelical decision is demanded of him, by considerations infinitely solemn and imperious. Nor can any reader forget, without guilt inexcusable, that he has been again and again summoned to the field of Christian enterprise. But if to any one the Volume has seemed tame and spiritless, let him be entreated not to throw it aside, without examining once more, whether the fault may not be found in his own head or heart.

The recollection, that two of the Contributors to this Volume have already gone to their Judge, may very properly excite others to do quickly, and with their might, whatsoever they intend; and may admonish all who read, as well as those who write, to be acting with constant reference to the same Judgment. That multitudes may on that day be found to have profited from these admonitions of the dying and the dead, is the humble prayer of the

EDITOR.

New-York, *May*, 1828.

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NATIONAL PREACHER.

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Vol. 2. NEW-YORK, JUNE, 1827. No. 1.

SERMONS XVII. & XVIII.

By LYMAN BEECHER, D. D. Boston, Massachusetts.

THE NATIVE CHARACTER OF MAN.

1. John, iv. 7—*Every one that loveth, is born of God.*

The love here spoken of, is holy love; which assimilates its subject to God. Every one that loveth, is born of God; that is, is a child of God, and bears his image. It is that love which is styled the fulfilling of the law, and which is the principle of evangelical obedience. It is religion. For every one that loveth, knoweth God: but to know God is life eternal;—is religion. This love does not belong to man by nature. It is never a quality of his heart, as a consequence of his birth; but is the result, in all cases, of a special divine interposition. For, if religion were the character first sustained by man, it would not be true that "every one that loveth is born of God."

It will be the object of this discourse, TO SHOW THAT MAN IS NOT RELIGIOUS BY NATURE. By religion we intend supreme love to God. By man we mean the entire race: and by the proposition, that man is not religious by nature, we mean, that there is nothing in him, of which religion is the natural effect or consequence, without a special divine interposition. When natural objects produce certain effects uniformly, we suppose that there is in them some cause for such results, which we call their nature; and if there be certain effects which they never produce, we say that it is not in their nature to produce them. When it is affirmed of man, therefore, that he is not religious by nature, we mean that there is nothing in his constitution of which religion is the result, without a special divine interposition; and that the first accountable character which he sustains is not a religious character. It will not be denied, that, if religion exist at all in man, it must be found in his heart. It must consist primarily in the state of his affections towards God—must include a predominant friendship for God, complacency in his character, delight in his service, approbation of his law, and resignation to the dispensations of his providence. With this view of the subject, we remark,

I. UNIVERSAL EXPERIENCE AFFORDS EVIDENCE THAT MAN IS NOT RELIGIOUS BY NATURE.

Have religious affections found a place in your hearts, my hearers, from your earliest years? Do all of you, even now, experience them? Do you believe that you are religious, and that you have been from the beginning? Are you prepared to die? Whatever you may be disposed to hope from the mercy of God, should you be called suddenly out of time, have you any evidence that you now possess, or ever have possessed, those affections of heart, which constitute a religious character, and are necessary to qualify for heaven? Are you conscious of supreme love to God? Do you love his word, his worship, his people? Do you maintain, habitually, secret prayer, and delight in the duty? Are you meek under injurious treatment, self-denied in temptation, and resigned to the will of God in affliction? This is religion. But is this the experience of any one in this assembly who has no reason to believe that he is born of God? If not, *you* certainly are not religious by nature. And if you present this outline of religious experience to your neighbour, you will find that he has nothing that answers to it in his first accountable state of feeling; and if you extend the inquiry through the world, you will find none who possess religious affections in the beginning.

This truth is confirmed also by the uniform experience of awakened sinners. From the day of Pentecost to the present, multitudes have experienced a deep anxiety for their souls. But universally the cause of this anxiety has been the discovery that they had no religion. They have perceived always that the law of God required of them affections of heart which they did not possess; and nothing has been found to aggravate their distress more than the simple direction, to love the Lord their God supremely, and to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. They have always replied, "we cannot love, we cannot repent, we cannot believe;"—a direct confession that they have no religion. We are sensible that there are multitudes who are not thus awakened. But does their stupidity prove that they are religious? or discredit the consciousness of those who are awakened, in respect to their own character? This consciousness then of all who are awakened, that they have no religion, is strong presumptive evidence that the fact is the same with respect to those who are not awakened.

To this we may add the testimony of those who furnish evidence of piety. Their testimony is, that their religious experience is a state of the affections, and is something *new*. We are not insensible that some persons profess religion who disclaim the existence of any great change in the state of their affections towards God; who claim that they have always from their earliest years loved God religiously. But it must be remembered, that the religion to which they lay claim, is not such religion as we have described. To this they make no pretensions; but ridicule it, often, as visionary and enthusiastic. We admit then, that men may have *such* religion as these persons profess without a change of heart. But we insist that the outline of religious experience which we have drawn is the religion of the Bible; and that all who are conscious of possessing it, do testify that it is a state of the affections, entirely new; and that this uniform testimony of the pious strengthens the presumption that religion is never the first character of man, but is always the result of a divine interposition.

II. THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD IS UTTERLY INCONSISTENT *WITH THE* SUPPOSITION OF NATIVE PIETY IN MAN.]

If man is religious by nature, we should expect to witness the effects of early and universal piety in the history of the world. A world whose inhabitants all begin their accountable course religiously, could not surely furnish the same materials for history as a world whose early character is that of alienation from God. But does the history of the world confirm the supposition that man is religious by nature? Of those who, in adult age, afford credible evidence of piety, three fourths at least continue to do so; and the reasons would be stronger in favour of perseverance, if religion were the first character of all men. But do three fourths of the human race, or one fourth, afford evidence of piety from childhood upward? Is it not a rare event to find it at all among children? Among real Christians religion is a predominant principle of action. But does the history of the world show that religion has been the predominant principle of action in the human race? What is the origin of governments but necessity? Families cannot dwell in safety in the world without protection, and therefore associate in tribes; and tribes, wearied with the action and re-action of violence, coalesce for safety, and form the more extended communities of nations. Until these great associations were formed the world had no rest, and the arts of civilized life were scarcely known. But towards each other nations have displayed the same principles of ambition and violence which marked the conduct of individuals, and families, and tribes. The history of nations is the history of crimes and blood, and not of peace and good will to men. If men were religious by nature, we might expect that the knowledge and worship of the true God would be in every age universal. Instead of this, two thirds of the human family have been idolaters. Notwithstanding the invisible things of God are clearly seen by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; and notwithstanding all that God has done by revelation, and by miracle, and by his Spirit, two thirds of the human family have changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to four-footed beasts and creeping things. Why is this? The evidence of His being is not obscure, and the divinity of idols is not supported by even specious evidence. The service of God is reasonable, pure, and benign; while that of idols is obscene, expensive, and bloody. Could a race, of which every individual commenced his accountable course under the influence of religion, have done thus?

III. IT IS THE UNIFORM TESTIMONY OF THE BIBLE, THAT MEN ARE NOT RELIGIOUS BY NATURE.

1. This is strongly implied in the utter silence of the scriptures in respect to the piety of man by nature. If the first character which man sustains is a religious character, the scriptures could not have failed to recognise it. It would be a commanding fact which would extend its implications through every page, and modify every doctrine. Surely the descriptions of a religious and of an alienated world would not be the same. But we have examined, one by one, all the passages which speak of the heart of man, and there is not *one* which declares or implies that it is the subject of religion by nature. Whence this silence? It is one great object of the Bible to make man acquainted with his own heart; and much is disclosed concerning its wickedness. Why is nothing said of its excellence, if religion be one of its native attributes? This

silence, though only negative testimony, corroborates greatly the preceding evidence that man is not religious by nature.

2. The Bible ascribes to the natural heart of man a character utterly incompatible with the existence of religion. Before the flood, every imagination of man's heart is described as being evil only, continually; and after that event, as evil still, from his youth. This last declaration is made also as a reason why God in all future ages will no more curse the ground for man's sake,—affording testimony, not only that the heart of man was evil then from his youth, but that it would continue to be so through all ages;—unreclaimed by judgments however numerous or severe. Thirteen hundred years later the hearts of the sons of men are described as "full of evil." And still later, as "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." The account which is given of the heart by our Saviour is as explicit and forcible as any of the preceding, "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, blasphemies."

Upon this testimony of the Bible we remark, that the heart of man is never described as becoming thus wicked by any change from native goodness to evil since the fall of Adam. But when described as evangelically good, it is always done in terms which imply a change from *evil* to *goodness*.

Whenever men conduct wickedly, they are regarded as illustrating their own natural character—as obeying the dictates of their own hearts. But when they manifest religious affections, these are described as the fruits of the Spirit; and when they are given up to irreclaimable wickedness, they are given up to their own hearts' lust—to their foolish and darkened hearts—to vile affections through the lust of their own hearts—after their hard and impenitent hearts treasuring up wrath. How then stands the testimony of the Bible concerning the heart of man? It is silent as to the existence in it of religion: It is described in terms which preclude its existence. It is never represented as becoming bad by the loss of religion, or as being good except as the effect of a divine interposition; and when abandoned to itself, it is always represented as being desperately wicked. Will it be alleged that this testimony is ancient, and that the heart of man may have changed for the better? To break the force of the testimony it must not only be possible that a change may have taken place, but it must be proved that it actually has taken place. Can such proof be found in the Bible? Is there a passage which asserts or implies that a universal change has taken place in the heart of man since the preceding descriptions of it were placed upon record.

Will it be alleged that Enoch, and Noah, and Moses, and Abraham, and others are spoken of as righteous, without any *mention* that they had experienced a change of heart? If it were so, it would not prove that no change had been experienced. The omission to recognise the change in the record, does not prove that it never happened. But it is implied of all these that they did experience a change of character. Faith implies a change of character, and is the gift of God. But by faith Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain. By faith Enoch walked with God. By faith Abraham offered his son. By faith Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. Will it be said that the pre-

ceding proof is contained in a few detached texts of Scripture? The texts are the testimony of God. They relate to the subject in question; and are direct and explicit. They are not detached from the context, to speak a meaning which they would not be authorized to speak in their connection. And as to their being detached in any other sense, what if they were all contained on one page? would that increase their perspicuity? Or what if they were multiplied an hundred fold? would that increase the evidence of divine testimony? How near together must the declaration of God be placed, and how often must they be repeated, to be entitled to credit? And what is the character of those to whom the Lord speaketh once, yea twice, and they regard it not?

3. The scriptural account of childhood and youth implies that mankind are not religious by nature. "Every imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." "Childhood and youth are vanity." "Folly is bound up in the heart of a child." "The wicked are estranged from the womb."

Could all this be said of childhood and youth, if the first accountable character they sustain were a religious character? Is every imagination of the pious evil? Is religion vanity, or folly, or estrangement from God? It must be remembered also that the preceding are not specific descriptions of some children and youth, but generic descriptions of the entire race of man in the early periods of life.

4. The generic descriptions of man contained in the Bible are such as preclude the supposition that he is religious by nature.

The term *man* includes all men of all nations. One nation is not man. All nations but one are not man. Every individual of the race is included; and whatever is declared of the *genus*, is declared concerning every individual as such. Is the lion ferocious? It is the character of all the race. Is the asp venomous? It is true of every asp. Is man born to trouble as the sparks fly upward? none then escape trouble. Does he die and waste away? there is no discharge then from that war.

When it is demanded, then, what is man that he should be clean, or he that is born of a woman that he should be righteous? it is a positive declaration that man is not clean—is not righteous—as a natural consequence of his birth. He possesses strength, and intelligence, and memory, and will, and affections, and appetites, and passions, as the result of a constitution with which he is born. But moral purity—righteousness—it is expressly declared, is not, like these, the consequence of natural birth.

The *world*, is another generic term by which the human race is characterized; and always in a manner which excludes the supposition of religion as being the first or natural character of man. We know that we (Christians) are of God; [that is, are born of God,] and the whole world lieth in wickedness. He (Christ) was in the world, and the world knew him not. O, righteous Father, the world hath not known thee. Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. I have given them thy word, and the world hath hated them. If ye [my disciples] were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, therefore the world hateth you. In these passages the world is contrasted with the pious; and both together, like the

ancient terms, Jew and Gentile, include all men. There is no middle class which belongs neither to the pious nor to the world. But the world is described as ignorant of God; as alienated from God; as opposed to Jesus Christ, and his cause and people; as lying in wickedness; as dead in trespasses and sins. Is this the description of a race whose first accountable character is that of loyalty to God?

The term *flesh* is also a generic term, descriptive of man in his native state. "My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that, (or because) he also is *flesh*." His being an animal, furnished no reason, surely, why the Spirit of God should not strive with him. It is his moral nature, therefore, which is called flesh; and which is described in other places as alienated from God, and as lusting against the Spirit; furnishing an obvious reason why the Spirit might abandon man. In his discourse with Nicodemus, our Saviour speaks of the *flesh* as being that *moral* nature of man which is the consequence of his natural birth. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Our Saviour would not surely undertake to convince Nicodemus that the animal body is flesh. Flesh and spirit are therefore moral qualities contrasted: the one, forming the first character of man; the other, the result of a special interposition of the divine Spirit. The one disqualifying, and the other fitting a man for the kingdom of heaven. The one, that moral nature of man which renders regeneration indispensable: the other, that holy nature which is produced by the Spirit of God, when he renews the heart.

The flesh is in other places described as the comprehensive principle of moral evil in man, as the Spirit is described as being the efficient cause of all good. The works of the flesh are adultery, fornication, idolatry, hatred, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like: But the fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. The flesh comprehends the depravity which remains in the Christian after he is renewed. I know that in me, in my flesh, there dwelleth no good thing. All my goodness is the result of regeneration; all my sin, the remains of my corrupt nature, called the flesh. The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit lusteth against the flesh; and these two are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. The flesh, then, being the first character of man, and the comprehensive principle of evil in him, is so described as to preclude the possibility of religion as his first moral nature. For the carnal or fleshly mind is enmity against God. To be carnally minded, is death; and they that are in the flesh cannot please God; and they that live after the flesh shall die.

5. All those terms which divide the race of man into two great moral divisions: such as the righteous and the wicked, the holy and the unholy, the godly and the ungodly, the just and the unjust, imply, that, not a religious, but a depraved character, is first sustained. That these terms of contrast include all men is certain. From the nature of free agency, and from the declaration of God, we know that neutrality cannot exist among accountable beings. Where men are qualified to obey, and love is required, neutrality would be disobedience. To regard God with indifference, compared with the creature, would be adding insult to rebellion. But

such a state of mind is impossible. No man can serve two masters—nor be indifferent towards them. He will love or hate, obey or despise. All men, then, are holy or unholy, righteous or wicked. But which is the first character sustained by man? the holy or the unholy? Not the holy, but the unholy. There is no intimation in the Bible, that men become unholy by any change from good to bad; but Christians are continually described as becoming holy by a change from bad to good. They are begotten again. They are born of God. They are created anew. They are raised from the dead. The old man is put off, and the new man is put on. By all this variety of language it is implied, that the evil nature of man is first, and that his holy nature is the result of a special divine interposition.

6. The avowed object of the death of Christ decides that mankind are not religious by nature. It was rendered necessary by a character sustained by all men. And what was the character sustained which awakened the compassion of God, and called from heaven his only begotten Son to die for man? The character sustained was that of alienation from God. Herein is the love of Christ commended, in that while we were yet enemies, he died for us. He suffered, the just for the unjust. "He died for all;" but it was because they "were all dead." In accordance with these representations, men are addressed by the gospel as *dead;* and are commanded to arise from the dead—as blind; and are commanded to see—as wicked; and are commanded to forsake their wicked way and turn to God. They are addressed as impenitent; and are called upon to repent; as in unbelief; and are commanded to believe. Every condition of pardon, proposed to men in the gospel, implies that they do not by nature possess it. The apostles, in their great commission, were directed to address every creature as impenitent: and Paul, in particular, was sent to the heathen, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to the living God.

When men obey the gospel, they are described as renewed—as reconciled—as sustaining new affections. Old things are passed away; behold all things are become new. The entire Christian character is described in the Bible as the work of the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, faith, &c. But the Spirit operates only in the application of the redemption purchased by Christ, in carrying into effect the objects of his death. Before he renews the hearts of men, therefore, for whom Christ died, they are enemies, unjust, and dead in sin.

Those who reject the gospel, and perish, are represented as sustaining their own original character—as despising the riches of the goodness of God, and after their hard and impenitent heart, treasuring up wrath;—as refusing when the Saviour called, and disregarding when he stretched out his hand. In short, men are described as becoming wicked, as a consequence of the fall of Adam, and religious, in consequence, and only as the consequence, of the interposition of Jesus Christ, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.

7. It is declared in direct terms, expressly and unequivocally, that mankind are not religious in their first character. The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men to see if there were any that did understand and seek God. To know and to seek God implies religion. The investigation, therefore, was instituted to decide the ques-

tion, whether there was an individual of the human race who was religious by nature. Not whether any had returned, of those who had gone astray; for of such we read in the context, and throughout the Bible; but to ascertain whether there were any of the race of man who had never turned away from God, but remained, like Abdiel, "faithful among the faithless." The result of this omniscient scrutiny is, "They are all gone aside; they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good; no, not one." This is the declaration of God concerning the children of men: the result of an omniscient investigation, made expressly to decide whether the effects of the fall were universal, or whether any religious affection remained. The apostle Paul quotes this declaration of the Most High to prove, and he says that it does prove, both Jews and Gentiles, (terms which then included all men,) that they are all under sin. But to be under sin is to be under its dominion, and under condemnation: for he proves the fact, that all are under sin, to cut off the hope of justification by the deeds of the law, and to establish the doctrine of justification by faith. But to be under the dominion of sin, and in an *unjustified* condition is surely inconsistent with the existence of religion. To corroborate his argument, the apostle quotes the following passage from the Old Testament, and he quotes it, that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world become guilty before God. "Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; their feet are swift to shed blood; destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace have they not known; there is no fear of God before their eyes." Now abate from this passage as much as is possible on the ground of metaphor, yet as it is quoted in a regular argument to stop every mouth, and to prove the whole world guilty before God, it does most certainly exclude the supposition of piety in those who are thus characterized. An open sepulchre is not the place of life: the poison of asps is not an emblem of health; and cursing and bitterness are not the fruits of the Spirit: nor are destruction and misery found in the ways of wisdom: nor can it ever be said of the truly pious, that they have no fear of God before their eyes. Language is of no use, and inspiration affords no evidence of truth, if these terms, applied to stop every mouth and prove the whole world guilty before God, do not prove that man in his first character is not religious.

8. There is also in the scriptures much inferential evidence on this subject. If man, in his first character, is religious, we should expect the fact would be implied in all the doctrines of the Bible, and if he is not religious, that it would also be implied. The difference is so great that the same doctrines cannot be true on either supposition. But to which of the two suppositions are the doctrines of the Bible accommodated? If man is not religious by nature, we should expect to find the necessity of a great moral change inculcated in the Bible. And do we not find it? "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." We should expect to find Christians described as those who had experienced this great change: and thus they are described as born of God, created anew, and passed from death unto life. As there can be no medium between religion and irreligion, we should expect the change would be

sudden. And do not all the terms which describe it imply that it is sudden? It is a creation. Is there a point of time in the process of creation, in which a substance is neither in being nor out of being? It is a resurrection from the dead. Is there a moment in which the body is neither dead nor alive? If all men in the beginning withhold from God the homage of the heart, we should expect they would continue to do so, until reclaimed by a divine interposition. And thus we read of those who received Christ, that they were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of man, *but of God.*

If religion in man is the result of a divine interposition, we should expect to find it described as an act of grace which God might grant, or withhold, according to his good pleasure. And do we not read that he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy? If men are without religion, we should expect that they would be required to give the heart to God, and repent, and believe immediately; and that those who perished would be represented as self-destroyers. And is it not so? Repent—believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. And do not all who perish under the light of the gospel, perish by neglecting the great salvation? Turn ye, for why will ye die? I called and ye refused. This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light.

If men are not religious in their first character, we should expect to find all their actions charged with sinful defect. And in accordance with this expectation we read, "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord." "The ploughing of the wicked is sin." "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." And "without faith it is impossible to please him."

In conclusion of the argument, I have only to add, that if the first accountable character of man is a religious character, this entire body of evidence must be reversed. All men must be conscious of supreme love to God in early life; and conviction of sin and a moral renovation must be confined to those who have lost their religion; while the great body of Christians must be supposed to be such without the consciousness of any change. At the same time the history of the world must be found to be a history of the fruits of piety,—idolatry itself being only an aberration of religious affection in children emulous to please their heavenly Father! It should moreover be found written upon the unerring page, 'Every imagination of man's heart is *good* from his youth. The children of men have *not* gone out of the way. There is none who *doth not* understand and seek God, and do good, no, not one. The heart of the sons of men is full of *goodness*, out of which proceed *holy* thoughts, benevolent deeds, chastity, truth, and reverence for God. What therefore is man that he should be *wicked?* or he that is born of a woman that he should *not* be religious? How *lovely* and pure is man, who drinketh in *righteousness* like water. This is the *approbation* that *darkness* is come into the world, and men have loved *light* more than darkness, because their deeds are *good.* The whole world lieth in *righteousness.* He [Christ] was in the world and the world *knew* him. O righteous Father, the world hath *known* thee. The friendship of the world is *friendship with God.* If the world hath loved you, ye know that it loved *me* before it loved you. Be ye therefore *conformed* to the world, and

be ye *not transformed* by any renewing of your mind. My Spirit shall *always* strive with man because *he* is spirit. For that which is born of the *flesh* is *spirit.* Marvel not that I say unto you ye *must not* be born again. For the works of the *flesh* are *love, joy, peace, faith;* and the fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, faith. In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth *every* good thing. Jesus Christ came to seek and to save those who were *not* lost; and he died *not* for his enemies—*not* the just for the unjust. The Gospel demands of men *no new character,* and all the doctrines of the Bible imply the early and universal piety of the human family.'

And now, who is prepared thus to reverse the whole testimony of *experience,* of *history,* and of the *Holy Scriptures?* In view of such overwhelming evidence to the contrary, will any man pretend to believe, that mankind are religious by nature?

If you had as much evidence that your water was poisoned, as you have that the heart of man by nature is not pious—would you drink it? Were the proof as clear that an assassin would meet you on turning a corner—would you go thither? Were it proved by as various and conclusive evidence that the fire was kindling on your dwelling—would you compose yourself to sleep? Will you then, in opposition to such evidence, still endeavour to persuade yourself of the native goodness of the human heart? If it were merely the body whose life was threatened by the deception, I might still cry earnestly to you to beware: but it is your *soul,* and your future and eternal well-being which you put in jeopardy by setting at naught such evidence. Without religion you cannot be admitted to heaven; and would not enjoy heaven if you were admitted. Without religion you can neither keep the law nor obey the gospel; and cannot escape the condemnation which rests upon transgression and unbelief. Will you then shut your eyes against light, and stop your ears against admonition? It is but for a moment, compared with eternity, that you can thus deceive yourself, and cry, Peace. The overwhelming consciousness must soon press upon your amazed heart, that you are without holiness, and cannot see the Lord; and that the harvest is past, the summer is ended, and you not saved. There is no hope in your case while you think your heart is good, and feel no need of a divine renovation. They that are whole need not the physician, but they that are sick: and Jesus Christ came to call, not the righteous, but sinners to repentance. While the delusion prevails that you are rich, and stand in need of nothing, you will reject the counsel of Christ, to apply to him for eyesalve that you may see, and for white raiment to cover the shame of your nakedness. You will do nothing to save your own soul, and God will do nothing to save it, while, under the concentrated light of evidence, you remain wilfully ignorant of your malady, and wilfully negligent of your only remedy. Admit, then, the painful, alarming fact, that you have no religion, and without delay commence the inquiry what you must do to be saved, and thus escape the coming wrath, and lay hold on eternal life. All who are now in heaven were once like you without God, and without Christ, and without hope; and all who are now on earth, strangers and pilgrims seeking a better country, were once like you without religion. But he who commanded the light to shine out of darkness has shined in their hearts—and the same blessed Spirit is able

and willing to enlighten you: but you must confess, and not cover your sin—you must come to the light, and not shun it—you must be convinced of sin, of righteousness, and of a judgment to come—you must be born again, or you cannot see the kingdom of God.

SERMON XVIII.

I. John, iv. 7.—*Every one that loveth, is born of God.*

The preceding discourse furnishes a scriptural account of human depravity. It is comprehended in the fact, that men have naturally no religion. If this has not been proved, we must abandon our confidence in the power of language to express ideas, and of evidence to prove matters of fact.

All which is admirable in intellect, or monitory in conscience, or comprehensive in knowledge, or refined in taste, or delicate in sensibility, or powerful in natural affection, may be found in man as the result of constitution, or the effect of intellectual and moral culture: but religion is not found, except as the result of a special divine interposition. The temple is beautiful, but it is a temple in ruins;—the divinity has departed, and the fire on the altar is extinct.

This depravity of man, implied in his destitution of religion, may be described briefly in the following particulars:

1. It is *voluntary*.—A depraved nature is by many understood to mean, a nature excluding choice, and producing sin by an unavoidable necessity; as fountains of water pour forth their streams, or trees produce their fruit, or animals propagate their kind. The mistake lies in supposing that the nature of matter and mind are the same; whereas they are entirely different. The nature of matter excludes perception, understanding, and choice; but the nature of mind includes them all. Neither a holy nor a depraved nature are *possible* without understanding, conscience, and choice. To say of an accountable creature, that he is depraved by nature, is only to say, that, rendered capable by his Maker of obedience, he disobeys, from the commencement of his accountability. To us it does not belong to say *when* accountability commences, and to what extent it exists in the early stages of life. This is the prerogative of the Almighty. Doubtless there is a time when man becomes accoun-

table, and the law of God obligatory: And what we have proved is, that, whenever the time arrives that it becomes the duty of man to love God more than the creature, he does in fact love the creature more than God—does most freely and most wickedly set his affections on things below, and refuse to set them on things above, and that his depravity consists in this state of the affections. For this universal concurrence of man in preferring the creature to the Creator, there is doubtless some cause or reason: but it cannot be a cause of which disobedience is an involuntary and unavoidable result. Ability to obey, is indispensable to moral obligation; and the moment any cause should render love to God impossible, that moment the obligation to love would cease, and man could no more have a depraved nature, than any other animal. A depraved nature can no more exist without voluntary agency, and accountability, than a material nature can exist without solidity and extension. Whatever effect, therefore, the fall of man may have had on his race, it has not had the effect to render it impossible for man to love God religiously; and whatever may be the early constitution of man, there is nothing in it, and nothing withheld from it, which renders disobedience unavoidable, and obedience impossible. The first sin in every man is *free*, and might have been, and ought to have been avoided. At the time, whenever it is, that it first becomes the duty of man to be religious, he refuses, and refuses in the possession of such faculties as render religion a reasonable service, and him inexcusable, and justly punishable. The supreme love of the world is a matter of choice, formed under such circumstances, as that man might have chosen otherwise, and ought to have chosen otherwise, and is therefore exposed to punishment for this his voluntary and inexcusable disobedience. If, therefore, man is depraved by nature, it is a voluntary and accountable nature which is depraved, exercised in disobedience to the law of God. This is according to the Bible—"They have all *gone* aside,"—each man has been voluntary and active in his transgression. "They go astray as soon as they be born;" that is, in early life:—How early, so as to deserve punishment, God only knows.—"The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God."—Every imagination or exercise of man's heart is evil. NATIVE DEPRAVITY, THEN, IS A STATE OF THE AFFECTIONS, IN A VOLUNTARY ACCOUNTABLE CREATURE, AT VARIANCE WITH DIVINE REQUIREMENT FROM THE BEGINNING OF ACCOUNTABILITY.

2. The depravity of man, implied in his destitution of religion, is *positive* depravity. Multitudes are willing to admit the fact, that they have no religion, who cannot be convinced that they are in a state of positive opposition to God. They are not conscious of opposition to God; they have a respect for his word and worship; and desire, they think, to be religious; and do many things with the hope of obtaining religion. But their transgression of the law and of the gospel, in refusing to love, repent, and believe, is voluntary and positive transgression. Not to love, repent, and believe, when these duties are required, is positive disobedience, both to the law, and to the gospel. But, can a subject disobey the fundamental laws of the government under which he lives, and not be opposed to the government, and positively wicked? and can a man disobey in his heart the law of God and his gospel, and not be positively opposed to his Maker and Redeemer? The divine requirement is,

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," and the man who has no religion refuses. The prohibition is, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me;" but the man without religion, in defiance of this prohibition, does love the creature more than God. Is not this positive disobedience? Were a course of action persisted in, which God forbids, that would be counted positive disobedience. But the obedience of the heart is of all others the most appreciated, and the disobedience of the heart, of all others, regarded as most evil. Some have admitted that they do not love God supremely; but have insisted, that neither are they opposed to God. But this neutral state, if it were possible, would be adding insult to disobedience: for the command is, Thou shalt not be indifferent,—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." Now, what greater insult can be offered to the glorious God, than to refuse him our *preference*, and hang in equilibrio between the attractions of his infinite glory, and the influence of a perishing world? But neutrality between such objects as God and the world, is impossible. It is the nature of mind to choose, if not prevented by force, as much as it is of matter to be quiescent, if not moved by external powers. To prefer the world, or God, is the unavoidable result of free agency. Not to choose at all, is the attribute of a stock or a stone; but not of a rational, accountable being. Nor is there any practical indication of neutrality. For whatever reverence a man may feel for God, and whatever external respect he may pay to him: his own consciousness will decide, and his course of conduct will confirm the decision, that his affections are set on things below, and his sources of enjoyment are found, not in God, but in the things of time. Here then the great law of the kingdom of God is violated by all who are without religion. But can the fundamental laws of a government be violated without opposition to the government?

This view which we have given of the mind, as excluding neutrality, is confirmed by the Bible. "No man can serve two masters." "He that is not for me is against me." "The friendship of the world is enmity with God." Hence, according to the Bible, men are holy or unholy, just or unjust, righteous or wicked, godly or ungodly, penitent or impenitent, believers or unbelievers, in a state of pardon or of condemnation. Therefore, the depravity of the man, who is destitute of religion, is positive depravity.

3. The depravity of man, which is implied in his destitution of religion, is *great*. Many suppose that although they are not religious, they are not *very* sinful. Provided they are amiable and conscientious in their moral deportment and useful in their lives, they cannot conceive that God should have much reason to be displeased with them. If they had been guilty of great actual crimes, they would be ready to admit that they were great sinners. But so long as the chief that can be said against them is, that they have no religion, *this*, if it be a crime at all, is so common, and results, (as they think,) so much from unavoidable necessity, as almost to take away guilt, and leave a fair balance of good deeds and virtues to recommend them to God.

Far different from this, is Heaven's estimation of the guilt of being without religion. According to the Bible, whenever it becomes the duty

of man to love God religiously, it is a duty of the highest obligation, the violation of which constitutes criminality of the highest order. The Being who demands love is worthy; the beings of whom he demands it are able to love; and the affections of his creatures belong to God. He claims them as his right, and declares that he is robbed when they are withheld. The highest good of his subjects for time and eternity, is found in giving their hearts to God, and ruin is the consequence of refusal. The obligation to love according to the law, is therefore superlatively great. It is also constant; so that the sinfulness of man is great in its nature and great in its amount; for it is the violation, constantly, of the highest possible obligation. And when this is done by those who are favoured with the gospel, their sin is immensely aggravated by the consideration of all that God has done to save them from death. They have perverted the means of grace, the mercies of his providence, and the judgments of his rod—they have despised the riches of his goodness, and the fierceness of his wrath. They have trodden under foot the blood of his Son, and done despite to the Spirit of grace:—and is all this criminality of a low degree and small amount, and so neutralized by human inability, as to be more than balanced by amiable dispositions and good actions? As God views the subject, those who do not love him, are sinful to an astonishing degree. "Hear, oh heavens! and give ear, oh earth! for the Lord hath spoken it, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me!"

4. The depravity of man implied in his destitution of religion, is *entire*. Most men who admit that they have no religion, resist the conclusion, that they are therefore *entirely* depraved. But to decide the point, we have only to ascertain in what purity of heart or holiness consists, and whether a man who has no religion possesses it. Purity of heart, or holiness, consists in *conformity of heart to the law of God*, and includes of course, *supreme love to God*. He, therefore, who has not supreme love to God, possesses no such affections of heart towards God as the law requires; and, so far as his heart is concerned, his depravity is entire. And as to actions, however correct in form they may be, they cannot, without holiness of heart, be regarded as obedience. The entireness of human depravity, therefore, consists in the constant voluntary refusal of man to love the Lord his God, with supreme complacency and good will.

The view we have taken of the character of man, as destitute of religion, illustrates both the nature and necessity of *regeneration*. The language of the Bible is clear and forcible on this subject; but it is claimed by many, that as there is no such moral defect in man as lays a foundation for the necessity of a universal moral change; those passages which might seem to teach it must be restricted, and understood to teach only the necessity of conversion from paganism, or Judaism, to Christianity. But the course of evidence, in these discourses, has disclosed a universal and appalling moral defect in man, which renders just such a change necessary as the language of the Bible indicates, according to its most direct and obvious import. To be without religion, is to be *dead in sin;* and to be so renewed by the Spirit as to love God supremely, is to be *raised from the dead*, and *born of God*. This is the change without which no man can see the kingdom of God.

This change, so indispensable, must also be a *perceptible* change. The attention to the means of grace and growing seriousness and solicitude which precede it, are progressive, as is the subsequent increase of holiliness and evidence of the change. But the change itself from selfishness to holiness—from supreme love of the world, to supreme love of God, is not a progressive, but an instantaneous change. This accords with the representations of the Bible. It is a new creation, a resurrection from the dead, &c. I do not say that every Christian perceives, at the time, the moment of transition; or that, perceiving that a change of some kind has taken place, he perceives at once the evidence that it is a saving change. Not unfrequently days and weeks may pass away, before he will dare to hope: and sometimes the truly pious, from a misapprehension of their evidence, may for years be afflicted with doubts and fears concerning their state. But that the change is real, and great, and instantaneous, when a sinner, who has loved the world supremely, first sets his affections on things above, is self-evident. It would be ridiculous in the relations of life, to talk of unperceived affection for a father or mother, husband or wife; and equally absurd is the supposition of loving God more than the world, without the occurrence of any perceptible change.

There is, I am aware, a general feeling, that men are not quite prepared to die without becoming better. But this emendation, it is thought by many, is to be attained gradually, by moral culture, and imperceptibly, as the grass grows by rain and sunshine. Any great solicitude, or deep conviction of sin, or sudden peace and joy, it is supposed, are not to be expected, but deprecated as delusion. And some, and even ministers, warn their friends not to be alarmed, and not to expect any sudden and happy change in their views and affections. But if there be with every man a time when he is not religious, there must be a time when he becomes religious. Even were religion the result of natural principles duly cultivated, there must be a time when cultivation has produced its results. If it were produced by the cultivation of some low degrees of goodness in man; still there must be a time when it reaches to the degree of goodness which constitutes religion. Or if, as the scriptures teach, there is no religion in the heart of man by nature, then there must be a moment of time when its existence in the heart begins. For that which once had no existence, and comes into being, must have a beginning. There is no medium between existence and non-existence, in matter, mind, or morals; no moment in which a thing is neither created nor uncreated, neither in existence nor out of existence.

It is absurd to speak of love as in a process of gradual formation: for what is half-formed love, repentance, faith, or any other trait of Christian character? How long must culture operate to produce the simple and indivisible emotion of love to God? And if the obedience of love must be gradual, and cannot be instantaneous, how is it that the requirements of Heaven should so disregard this constitution of mind, as to command man immediately to love and repent, and warn him of growing hardness of heart as the consequence of delay? As all men, then, are destitute of religion by nature, its commencement in the soul is at all times sudden.

There is a moment when he who loved the world more than God begins to love God more than the world.

You have now before you the evidence that men are not religious by nature; and that this destitution implies the universal and entire depravity of man, and the necessity of a great and sudden change in the affections, by the special influence of the Holy Spirit. This is not a matter of abstract speculation, of no practical utility. Our being and accountability are eternal, and the law of God, which is the rule of obligation, is eternal. Heaven is a religious world, and the present is our state, and our only state of probation. Here in this morning of our being the elements are formed of an immutable character in the eternal state: and if that which is first formed is one that unfits us for heaven, and fits us for destruction, can we too soon or too clearly perceive it, or too deeply feel it, or too earnestly strive to be conformed in our affections to the requirements of the Gospel, to the conditions of pardon, and to the exigencies of the heavenly state? What then is the improvement which you will make of these discourses, whose hearts tell you that you have no religion? Will you say, that these are *hard sayings*, and that you do not like such doctrine? But is it therefore untrue, because it is painful? And will you, dare you, in the presence of such evidence, reject it in favour of the dictates of mere inclination? Will you apply to such as endeavour to explain away this evidence, and speak to you smooth things, and prophesy deceits? Beware! others before have done this, and "God sent them strong delusions, that they might believe a lie and be damned, because they had no pleasure in the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." You may persuade yourself, or be persuaded, that a change of heart is not necessary to prepare you for death and heaven, and yet,

"This fearful truth will still remain;
The sinner must be born again,
Or drink the wrath of God."

Do you then at length inquire what you must do to be saved? The answer is plain—Repent, and you shall be forgiven; believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved. Neglect then the subject no longer. Resolve that from this time you will make the salvation of your soul your first and great concern. Break off your alliance with vain persons and diverting amusements: read your Bible daily and earnestly alone; and lift up your cry to God, in earnest supplication for mercy; plead guilty, and cry for pardon through a Redeemer's blood.

THE

NATIONAL PREACHER.

Go....Teach all Nations.....*Mat.* xxviii. 19.

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SERMON XIX.

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THE UNREASONABLENESS AND DANGER OF INDECISION.*

ACTS XXVI. 28. *Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.*

THIS acknowledgment was made by the king, while Paul stood before him a prisoner in chains. Being permitted to speak for himself, the apostle begins with relating his manner of life from his youth; —how that after the strictest sect of their religion, he lived a Pharisee. He next mentions his former zeal in persecuting the saints—Which went to prove the sincerity of his new course of conduct, while it cleared him from the charges of his accusers. He then relates the circumstances of his miraculous conversion; and the fact of his receiving from Christ himself a commission to preach the gospel; and shows, that his preaching repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, was only in obedience to the heavenly vision. He thus effectually pleads his own cause, and the cause of his divine Master. He then appeals directly to the king, in the conciliatory and pertinent language that precedes the text.—"King Agrippa, believest thou the

* This Sermon having been preached in several places, with very manifest tokens of the divine blessing, was requested of Mr. Wilcox for publication in this Work. In consequence of which, a short time before his lamented death, which took place May 28th, gave permission that the manuscript be forwarded to the Editor.

prophets? I know that thou believest." Then Agrippa said unto Paul, *Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.*

Preaching like this of Paul, often produces the same effect and no more. Conscience is awakened to the reality and importance of religion; while the heart is not yet ready to receive the truth in the love of it. Probably very few, if any, enjoy a preached gospel for any considerable time, without being brought in their minds to the very point to which Agrippa was brought, when he uttered the sentiment of the text. In many, doubtless, this state of mind is frequent. They are often just upon the point of becoming Christians. They continue perhaps year after year in this state of indecision: and many, it is to be feared, go down to the second death, who all their lives long, were almost persuaded to become Christians.

I have chosen these words of king Agrippa, as the foundation of some remarks upon the UNREASONABLENESS and DANGER of such indecision, with respect to religion.

I. We will consider, in the first place, the UNREASONABLENESS of such indecision.

1. This will appear evident, first, from a view of the *advantages* which are enjoyed for forming a decision.

It cannot be too often repeated, that even the works of creation exhibit enough of God's wisdom and benevolence to lead us at once to adore, love, and obey Him, if it were in our hearts to love infinite excellence. Our first parents could see enough of God in the beauties of Eden, and in the glories of the firmament, to awaken spontaneous emotions of gratitude and praise. And if we do not discover constant manifestations of the divine glory, in creation, it is only because our eyes are blinded by sin. And is it not unreasonable to shut our eyes, and grope in darkness at noonday, and then complain of the want of light?

But God has given us something more than the light of nature: though his justice did not require him to do it. A just sovereign is under no obligation, surely, to send messengers with terms of reconciliation to a few outcasts upon the borders of his dominions, who have fallen off from their allegiance by unprovoked rebellion.

Much less is he under obligation to make any sacrifice for their recovery; or to reason and plead with the rebels, when *they* only can be benefitted by such expense, and labour, and condescension. But God has sent to our rebellious world an embassy of peace, at an immeasurable expense; and has condescended to reason and plead with us, that we would be reconciled to him. He has sent down to us the Bible, containing a written revelation of his will, and containing the only terms on which the guilty can be restored to favour and to happiness.

Do you doubt whether the origin of this book is divine? It is not my present purpose to examine the evidence by which its inspiration is proved. My object is rather to exhibit the *advantages* for making such an examination; and to enforce the duty of doing it; and of coming to a decision without delay. One practical appeal respecting this evidence shall suffice. You wish to know if the Bible be divine. Will not the same evidence satisfy you which satisfied Paul? You *have* the very same; the same miracles and the same testimony. Nay, you have *more* evidence of the truth of the Christian system, than Paul had. You have increased evidence in the striking fulfilment of prophecies since his time; particularly in the state of the Jews, from that period to the present. You have increased evidence in the trial that Christianity has undergone for eighteen hundred years; in the triumphs it has gained over the world, and the powers of darkness; in the thousands that have sealed their testimony to its truth with their blood; and in the millions it has transformed from the image of Satan into the holy image of God.

Paul had evidence enough of the divine origin of Christianity, to induce him to leave all for its sake, and to account all but loss for its excellence; enough to induce him to part with kindred and country, that he might make known its unsearchable riches to his fellow-men; enough to enable him resolutely to go through perils the most appalling; to suffer hunger and thirst, cold and nakedness, watchings and fastings, shipwrecks and persecutions, stripes, and dungeons, and deaths. While you, who have much more evidence of the truth of Christianity than he had, are not prepared heartily to take a single de-

cisive step in its favour. What then is the conclusion that is forced upon us? Shall we say that the great apostle of the gentiles was a weak and credulous man? Or rather that *you*, who remain undecided about the truth of Christianity, are unreasonable and stubborn in unbelief, or awfully negligent of examination?

The truth of Christianity is not more evident, than its doctrines are *intelligible*. A revelation that cannot be understood is an absurdity. What is revealed cannot at the same time be hidden. The hidden things pertaining to the Christian system lie beyond the range of revelation; and of course belong not to us, as creatures of time; but are reserved to be the themes of eternity.

It is not pretended that there are no mysteries connected with the religion of Christ. Mysteries there must be in a religion coming from the infinite God, to creatures of the dust and of yesterday. But the mysteries of our religion add to the proofs of its great excellence, as well as to those of its high origin. Where would be the infinite grandeur and beauty of a system of religion, that we could fully comprehend in this infancy of our being? Who would not wish for a religion in which something, nay, much is left to be revealed by the light of eternity?

It is readily conceded then, that there are some things in the Scriptures, hard to be understood; and which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest to their own destruction. And if you would wait to see every dark passage in the Bible made clear, before you determine to give up your heart to its influence, you must wait all your days in vain, and perish at last in your sin. For there is not the least probability, that you will see what no man, holy or unholy, learned or unlearned, has ever yet seen. It is the resort of the captious sinner, when pressed with truths that are plain, to demand an explanation of those that are mysterious. Urge upon him the duty of repentance, and he will stifle all conviction by adverting to the inexplicable union between human and divine agency. As if a man should reject what he can understand, because there is something else which he cannot understand.

But those truths necessary to be understood, in order to become a true disciple of Christ, are plain and simple. They could not be more so. The moral law of God, our only rule of duty, is comprehended in the ten commandments; which common sense cannot fail of understanding. The sum of the ten commandments, as given by Christ himself, is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself." Every child knows what it is to love his parents. But it is just as easy to know what it is to love God. Repentance and faith are the terms of salvation proposed in the gospel. Every child knows what it is to be grieved when he has done wrong; and what it is to rely with confidence and affection upon his parents for a supply of all his wants. The meaning of repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, as illustrated in the Bible, is not less obvious to the child in divine knowledge.

But, my hearers, your advantages for forming a decision on the subject of religion, do not stop here. You hear the gospel preached by men set apart to the sole business of expounding and inculcating its truths: and you have one day in seven to devote exclusively to this object. You then, that have lived seven years, have had one whole year for this important business; and you that have lived twenty-one, have had three; and you that have lived forty-two, have had six; and you that have lived seventy, have had ten;—ten whole years of hallowed time, for deciding the simple question, whether you will be, not only almost, but altogether Christians; whether you will serve God with an undivided heart, and live and die in the faith of Jesus.

In addition to these numerous advantages for forming a decision, the Divine Spirit is waiting to aid you. And he warns and beseeches you to become reconciled to God. The Spirit and the Bride say, Come.—Come, for all things are now ready. No more preparations then are to be made on the part of God; and no motives more constraining are to be set before you. No other law, more holy, just, and good, enforced by higher and more powerful sanctions, is to be published from another Mount Sinai; no other more awful array of thun-

derings, and voices, and lightnings, and earthquakes, is to attend its promulgation; no other gospel of brighter promises is to come forth from the sanctuary of heaven; no other Saviour of more prevailing worth is to appear on the altar of sacrifice, or on the throne of intercession; no other heaven, of richer and more enduring glories, is to excite your hopes; and no other hell, of deeper and more lasting woes is to alarm your fears. All are placed before you now; and you are called upon by every possible motive to decide without delay. Indecision is therefore unreasonable. But,

2. This unreasonableness must appear further evident, from a consideration of the immense *importance* of religion.

Notwithstanding all the evidence that the religion of Christ is of divine authority, and all the advantages enjoyed in a Christian land for understanding it; there are multitudes who read about it, and hear its truths preached all their days, without ever sitting down to its examination, and deciding for themselves upon its importance. Their belief in its first principles is so little the result of reflection, and is so indefinite, that it scarcely deserves the name.

Even their belief in the existence of God is not founded on evidence which they have seen and contemplated; but it is taken up as a common opinion, handed down from their fathers. But do they really believe in the existence of such a God as the Bible reveals? What would be thought of the man who should affirm, that he believed the world would be burnt up to-morrow, while at the same time he was pulling down his barns to build greater; and saying to his soul, "Soul, take thine ease; thou hast much goods laid up for many years; eat, drink, and be merry?" He would be pronounced a madman, or a base hypocrite.

What better can be said of those impenitent men, who affirm that they believe in the God of the Bible,—that God who declares that he is "angry with the wicked every day," and that "their feet stand on slippery places;" while at the same time, they live as if God were at peace with them, and their feet planted firm on the everlasting hills? Ask them if they do not deem religion important; and they answer

promptly in the affirmative. But you have the mortification to see, that it is the answer of a child who repeats his part, because it is his part. They answer too promptly for serious, heart-felt conviction. Perhaps they grant every thing you ask, in order to pass easily over the unwelcome subject; and by conciliating your good opinion, keep you from coming to that personal appeal which they so much dread. They acknowledge that religion is an excellent thing,—in as cold and heartless a manner, as if it were something in which they had no personal concern. They do not regard it as equally the concern of every son and daughter of Adam; but associate it with their minister, or with the church,—as in some degree professional. They do not regard it as the business of every situation; but as sacred to special occasions; —not as the business of their whole life; but the thing of a moment, to be embraced once for all—just as much of it as they think necessary to carry them to heaven.

But religion cannot be thus treated with safety or impunity. It does not deserve such treatment. Aside from its claims to divine authority, and simply on account of its effects on the world—the change of character which it has wrought in multitudes—the support it has given them in all their trials to the last sinking hour—and the hope of full immortality which it has then inspired,—on these accounts, if on no other, it well deserves the examination of every rational man. Whence these great effects on the human character and condition? is a question that no thinking man would leave untouched and undecided, if he were not blinded by prejudice and hardened by sin.

The infidel lays claim to reason;—here is matter for reason. Tell me the reason of this change—from the tyger into the lamb—from the murderous persecutor into the chief apostle of the gentiles.

The moralist lays claim to humanity. What is this, that healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up all their wounds?—that breathes peace on earth and good will to men?

But religion has yet still higher demands upon your attention. Consider its origin. It does come from heaven—from Him who cannot lie. And if such be its origin, it is just what it professes to be—the "one thing

needful." It would not come clothed with the dignity and enforced by the authority of Jehovah, if it were not all-important. As sure as Jehovah does not trifle and sport with the happiness of his creatures, this cannot be. The Creator has not turned the eyes of the whole universe to this province of his dominions—this dim speck of earth—to witness a mock-show of transactions that have only the semblance of importance. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." It is not said, that the angels rejoice over the rise and prosperity of an empire. No—it must be something of more moment to fill their disinterested minds with transport;—even the conversion of a sinner—the salvation of a soul. Angels know the importance of such an event. And therefore it is that they rejoice.

Religion is every thing, if it be true; and it is nothing, if it be false. If Christ died at all, it was for an object whose importance can be measured only by the destinies of eternity. If there are any joys laid up for the righteous, they are joys which it hath not "entered into the heart of man to conceive:" and if there is any wrath in store for the wicked, it is "the wine of the wrath of God, poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation."

You cannot, then, make the question of religion a matter of small moment. It is every thing, or it is nothing. All is at stake, or nothing. There is no middle ground: and no wise man will rest till the point is decided. It behooves every one, then, to be fully persuaded in his own mind,—to settle down for ever on one side or the other of this momentous question. "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him, but if Baal, then follow him."

If any of you mean to die without religion,—but you do not,—*no*, you do not.—If then you mean to live without it, your first step should be to prove it unimportant, that you may throw it away at once, and thus free yourselves from its restraints. This you cannot do: and the very idea of being engaged in such an attempt would fill you with horror. Admit the shadow of a thought to come across your mind, that possibly the scene of Calvary is a fable, and it would chill you to

the heart, to see the world thus stripped of its hope, and the universe of its glory.

Since, then, you cannot determine to reject religion entirely, you seem to allow it some importance. But, I repeat it, if it is any thing, it is *every* thing. Indecision, therefore, on the subject of religion is altogether unreasonable. It is madness to be only almost persuaded. This leads us to consider,

II. The DANGER of indecision in religion.

1. It *hardens the heart*, and thus renders a favourable decision less and less probable.

The man who lives year after year, no more than almost persuaded to be a Christian, is not waiting for more light. Still he waits, though he cannot tell why. He perhaps wonders that he can rest a moment in uncertainty—talks of his delay as a calamity, and not as a crime—and resolves, over and over again, that henceforth he will be in earnest. He is often about to embrace religion—often on the point of coming to Christ. Many things move him; but nothing governs him. Such a man has many seasons of particular sensibility. A text of scripture troubles him, or a sermon affects him. But they are soon forgotten. He is struck to the heart by the death of a friend, and mingles his tears with the clods that cover him. He goes silently away; and while he keeps in view the chilling images of that cold, dark, narrow bed of corruption; and perhaps paints to his mind the whole scene of death and burial, and considers how it will soon be thus and thus with him,—he is almost ready to resolve that he will give himself no rest, till he is sure that he shall die in peace and sleep in Jesus. But all in a few days is forgotten, or remembered as a dream when one awaketh.

And now, what is the effect of this indecision?—of these half-formed resolutions,—these seasons of sensibility that pass away like the morning cloud and the early dew? Do they soften, or do they harden the heart? Is a man the better, or is he the worse for them? I am not pleading for insensibility. "O that our head were waters, and our eyes fountains of tears, that we might weep day and night" over the hardness of human hearts! But is it not a fact, that the acutest sensi-

bility is blunted by being often exercised to no purpose? Have none of you acquaintances, neighbours, or friends, whose hearts have been melted many a time, only to be frozen the harder? Once they wept at the love of Jesus—but they do not weep now. Once they trembled at the terrors of death and judgment—but they do not tremble now. Whence this change? Truth is not changed. The love of Christ is still the same. It is the same thing to die, and to stand at the bar of God. No messenger in the mean time has come from the invisible world, to lower the terms of salvation. No one has come from heaven to tell them that its glories have passed away—that its crowns have faded, and its songs have ceased. No one has come from hell, to tell them that its fires are quenched; and that its weeping and wailing are hushed for ever. God sits on the same high and holy throne, supporting his government on the same eternal principles. All things in heaven and hell remain unchanged; and they find the same things on every page of the Bible. The change, then, must be wholly in themselves. That understanding, once so clear, is now darkened; that heart, once so tender, is now hardened; that conscience, once so wakeful, is now lulled to sleep. They have resolved and re-resolved so often—they have wavered, and doubted, and hesitated so long—that they seem almost proof against any lasting impression. And are there none of you, whom this "halting between two opinions,"—this being only "almost persuaded to be a Christian"—is likely to ruin? Are there none of you in danger of being hardened through the deceitfulness of this sin? Does religion appear to you now as it once did? Are you as much impressed with its importance, and as easily affected by its truths as you once were?

The time has been, when you left the house of God with an aching heart—chose the most retired path homeward, that no one might break in upon your reflections—and stole away to some secret chamber, to give vent to the overflowings of a wounded spirit. For a day or two you were solemnly thoughtful. Perhaps you went, of your own accord, to a pious friend, with the momentous inquiry on your faltering tongue; and thus wakened the dear hope that you were about to choose that

good part, which should never be taken from you. But you hesitated till the favourable moment was past. Your convictions were stifled—your tears dried up. Then you shunned that pious friend; because his presence reproved your instability. You grew more and more careless, till another occasion like that just mentioned again arrested your attention, and, after leading you through a course of similar feelings and conduct, passed off in the same manner—only leaving you still more careless and more hardened. And how is it with you now? Have the wonders of redemption lost none of their charms, and the realities of eternity none of their power? Is it as easy to be almost persuaded to be a Christian, as it once was? Is there no reason to fear, that while you are at a stand, the work of hardening the heart is still going on, and that the time is not far distant when the long-suffering of God will wait no more to be trifled with by such unstability?

This brings us to consider another danger of indecision:—

2. It may provoke God to *leave you for ever.*

The sin of those who hesitate between life and death, is aggravated by some circumstances, which do not attend that of the open profligate and avowed infidel. I am not saying that it is greater on the whole, but only that it is aggravated by some circumstances peculiar to itself. They may think that they respect religion more, and perhaps they do respect it more than the infidel and profligate: but they stop at a point surrounded with so much more light,—they see Christ and the world of glory on the one hand, and this world and the world of wo on the other—and waver between them with so much more deliberation, that they are guilty of more shameful trifling and more daring inconsistency. And think you that it will not provoke the anger of Jehovah, to see men who acknowledge his infinite excellence, putting him off with half of their hearts? Will the Father look on with indifference, while his well-beloved Son is treated with such indignity as to be made the rival of him who is called the god of this world? Will he behold unmoved, while those mansions which he has prepared at such an expense, and filled with such glories, are brought down to a competition with this vain earth, upon which he has stamped his curse? Will he

always continue to set life and death before the sinner, while the former is bartered away for vanity, and the latter braved as an empty sound? If any sinners are ever given over to a reprobate mind, so that the Spirit ceases to strive with them, what class is in more danger of such reprobation, than the one we have been contemplating? Does the Bible speak of the blinded mind and hardened heart of those who are given up of God? And are not these the consequences of indecision? Does the Bible speak of such as crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to open shame? And are not these almost Christians in imminent danger of doing it?

Reflect for a moment upon the character and history of Saul, the king of Israel. Follow him from the day of his anointing to the day of his death; and you will trace the steps by which a man who is but "half a saint, makes his own destruction sure." He was always wavering. One day he made supplication to the Lord; and the next he disobeyed him in the sight of all Israel. One day he wrought deliverance for God's chosen people; the next he rejected God himself, and was then rejected of God from being king. Then, it is said, "the Lord departed from him;" and that was the turning point of his destiny; and his history onward to the close of life is marked with despair the most heart-rending. Every action bespeaks an outcast from the favour of God, seeking refuge, but finding none. He went about to kill David, the Lord's anointed, but was afraid of him, for the Lord was with him. The Philistines made war against him and he was sore distressed. He inquired of the Lord, as aforetime, but the Lord answered him not. He called upon Heaven for accustomed aid; but all was silence the most profound and appaling. All communication between him and a merciful Heaven, was cut off for ever. His despair then drove him to unlawful acts, to pry into the secrets of the invisible world,—but only to hear his own doom from the mouth of his former friend and father.—"*Wherefore dost thou come to me, seeing the Lord is departed from thee, and become thine enemy? To-morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me.*" On the morning of that fatal day, he went forth to the battle, with this sound from the invisible world ringing in

his ear, and a certain fearful looking for of judgment thrilling his bosom :—he rushed along till the maddening energy of despair was all spent—then fought awhile at random—then fled from the field, and plunged into the eternal world, with the guilt of self-murder on his soul. This is the end of one who was once "almost a saint." There is not in the world a more sorrowful sight, than the ruin of such a man. You may contemplate the fall of a kingdom without emotion—you may sit on some high eminence, and survey the ruins of the last conflagration without a tear,—but over such a fall, and the ruin of an immortal being, the heart of adamant must feel ; the stones of the street might almost cry out, and the mountains take up a wailing, and the hills a lamentation.

And did you never know of a fall in any degree similar to this? Did you never know a man who appeared to be, at least, fast verging towards a similar fall? What better prospect has he, who, in a season of the out-pouring of the Spirit, or upon a sick-bed, mourns over the sins of his past life, lifts his warning voice to his companions in iniquity, and calls for the Christians whom he once despised, to instruct him and pray for him ; but when the season of general stupidity returns, or health is restored, is ashamed of what he calls his weakness, pronounces it a delusion, joins with his old companions in making a mock of the warnings he gave them, shuns the Christians who remind him of his prayers and promises, and at length settles down into a state worse than the first?

REMARKS.

From the view which has been taken of this subject, it follows very obviously, that to be *almost* a Christian will not save the soul.

There are many who rest contented with making some approach toward the Christian character, and feel a degree of complacency, in being not far from the kingdom of heaven. But no promise of salvation is made to such. Christ has not pronounced them blessed. Into the region in which they dwell, though ever so near his kingdom, there shines no cheering light from his countenance—no beam of hope from the Sun of Righteousness.

By none of the remarks that have been made on the subject of indecision, have I intended to intimate that they who thus hesitate, are standing on neutral ground, where they are neither the friends nor the enemies of God, and where they have as little to fear from his wrath as to hope from his favour. The Bible acknowledges no such neutrality of state and character. From its whole tenour, and its explicit declarations, it is as clear as any truth that ever came from heaven, that *he who is not with Christ is against him*, and must take his eternal portion with all that are against him. The contending principles and emotions in the man we have been contemplating—the conflicts between his conscience and heart—his fluctuations between duty and inclination—between God and the world, life and death, are only aggravations of his guilt. And beneath them there is a strong current, like one of those beneath the tumultuous waves of ocean:—a current that is bearing him along in no uncertain direction, and to no uncertain end. And toward that fearful end, his course is no less rapid than direct.

It is vain for men to think of keeping destruction at a distance, and keeping the uplifted arm of vengeance long suspended, by wavering, and hesitating, and deferring the time of decision:—vain indeed to think of delaying the hour of their doom, by delaying that of their promised repentance. While they stand doubting as to their choice between life and death, the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that come upon them make haste. *They* may linger, but their "judgment lingereth not;" they may *slumber*, but their "damnation slumbereth not." And will it not be dreadful to perish, after having been almost a Christian?—dreadful to go down to the world of darkness by that path which lies nearest the regions of light? Think you, that to have been almost a Christian on earth will take from the lost sinner, the bitterness of misery? Will not this nearness to salvation tend rather to enhance the awfulness of final ruin? To enjoy so much divine illumination, as clearly to see the path of life, and readily to acknowledge the obligation to walk in it, and to feel so strongly the numerous motives inviting and impelling towards it, and the influences of

the Spirit pressing these motives—to feel these so strongly as to make a near approach to heaven's gate; and then after all to turn back; or to stand there till it be closed for ever—ah! this must prepare the soul for aggravated misery. To go, as it were, to the top of Calvary, ponder upon its divine wonders, contemplate the Lamb of God in his dying agonies, and feel the mind overawed at the sight, and the heart almost melted into penitence, and almost kindled into love,—and still to hesitate, and to reject the great salvation—ah! this is trampling under foot the blood of atonement, and incurring that sorer punishment due to such guilt. And if, in the dark world of wo, any forlorn wretch will be stung to the heart with a keener feeling of anguish than all others, will it not be the man, who on earth came nearest to the kingdom of heaven—and then lost it, for want of one decisive step? As he calls to mind the unnumbered mercies here enjoyed—the oft-repeated proffers of salvation here slighted; and as he lifts his weeping eye to that world of glory above,—O, with what bitterness of spirit—with what sinking and dying of the heart within him, will he exclaim, 'Time was when I bid fair for a seat in yonder region—when I was well nigh an heir to that incorruptible inheritance; I did but just miss the path to those realms of light and life everlasting,—just fail of being one in that happy company around the throne of God; I had my hand almost upon a crown like one of theirs; a little more, and now, instead of wailing here among the lost, I had been singing there among the redeemed!' O, that *little more!*—it will bite like a serpent, and sting like an adder. Surely, to be sinking for ever in the bottomless pit, must be damnation enough without the everlasting recollection of having plunged from the threshold of heaven!

It is time then, my hearers, to have done for ever with merely supposing religion to be important, and coldly wishing that its spirit and its blessings were ours, and almost resolving to obtain them. It is no time to hesitate, when all is at stake; no time to delay our choice between life and death, when that day may come unawares which will take this question out of our hands, and decide it for us, and decide that we are undone for eternity. Let us then rise at once

to the high and holy resolution, of being, not only almost, but altogether *Christians*, and devoting ourselves, with our whole heart, to the service of our divine Lord and Redeemer. This life is so short and uncertain —the life to come is so long and so sure—the work assigned to this transient state is so momentous—so great is the hazard of delay—the consequence of failure is so woful—and so glorious the reward of success—that the wise man will tremble at one wasted hour. He will give himself no rest, till the great question of life and death is settled, as he would wish to have it settled for ever. Every wise man will make this his first business; and he that is wise, is wise for himself, while he that scorneth, he alone must bear it. Yes,—he *must* bear it, and bear it *alone* for ever.

"While God invites, how bless'd the day!
How sweet the Gospel's charming sound!
Come, sinners, haste, Oh, haste away,
While yet a pardoning God he's found.

"Soon, borne on time's most rapid wing,
Shall death command you to the grave;
Before his bar your spirits bring,
And none be found to hear, or save.

"In that lone land of deep despair,
No Sabbath's heavenly light shall rise;
No God regard your bitter prayer,
Nor Saviour call you to the skies.

"No wonders to the dead are shown,
The wonders of Redeeming love;
No voice his glorious truth makes known,
Nor sings the bliss of climes above."

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SERMON XX.

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MIRROR OF HUMAN NATURE.

PROVERBS, XXVII. 19.—*As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man.*

THIS text has received various interpretations; but there is among them one, more generally approved by the friends of truth than any other; and which it would seem to me, is its plain and obvious meaning:—As a man looking into the water, (used anciently as a mirror,) sees there an exact transcript of his own countenance, so every heart has by nature precisely the same moral character with every other unsanctified heart. However men may differ, as to the *circumstances* of their being—as to their *age*, *country*, *habits*, and *education*—still every child of Adam, till renewed by divine grace, has, in the view of Omniscience, the same moral aspect.

Many, who still wish to be considered believers in divine revelation, have asserted, that the parts of Scripture, which give unregenerate men a deformed and polluted character, are not applicable to men of the present day. When Paul says of the unregenerate world, and quotes the saying from another inspired author, "There is none righteous, no not one; there is none that understandeth; there is none that seeketh after God; they are all gone out of the way; they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one; their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; their feet are swift to shed blood; destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace they have not known; there is no fear of God before their eyes";—when he says all this, it is roundly denied that in civilized lands—lands enlightened and polished—there can be found beings of so barbarous a character. It may possibly suit the Turk, the Arab, and the Tartar; and may be adapted to some few outcasts in more favoured lands; but as a general description of unregenerate men, it is rejected with proud disdain.

In this style the Bible has of late been rudely mangled, till many feel themselves quite at liberty to deny the application to themselves of any text that would go to neutralize their creed, or wound their high sense of the dignity of human nature. It is hence considered important to show,

That men, in all countries and ages, and under every variety of customs and manners, have had, and continue still to have, naturally, the same moral character.

This doctrine it will be my object to illustrate. But I shall first notice some of the circumstances which have contributed to make men differ in their conduct, who have by nature the same moral character.

In the first place, *grace* has made a wide difference in men who were by nature alike. This has been the case in most countries, and in all ages, since God first set up his church in the family of Adam.

In the second place, the difference in *the instinctive passions and affections* has made men to differ in their conduct.

In the third place, some have not the *talents* for doing mischief that others have. This one cause may operate, when there is no other, to produce the greatest difference of conduct, where there is the same temper of heart.

In the fourth place, some have not the *opportunity* to do mischief that others have. There may be the disposition, and the talents for gigantic iniquity, but opportunity may be wanting. Nero and Julian *had the opportunity*, while many a wretch during their reign, possessing perhaps equal talents, obtained no celebrity in the service of their infernal master. There are men base enough to burn a world, who will die after having done but little mischief.

I remark, finally, that one man may achieve less mischief than another, because *more restrained*. One man is held back from iniquity by his conscience. In another, pride prevents him from descending to the deeds of sin which he would love to do. In another, interest is the restraining principle. Hence the most decent among all the ungodly, may have a heart that will compare in its every feature, with that of the thief, the robber, and the assassin; though restrained from their deeds of death.

Having thus noticed some of the circumstances which have made men to differ in their conduct and appearance, who have by nature the same character of heart, I proceed to illustrate the doctrine, *That men, in all ages, and under every variety of customs and manners, have had, and still continue to have, naturally, the same moral character.*

1. We might infer the truth of this doctrine, prior to any argument, from the similarity of origin, aspect, and general habits, that belong to all ages and all nations of men. All men sprang from the same first parents; in their veins flows the same blood; they have the same general spirit; feed on the same food; and have all naturally the same general habits; and prior to any extraneous applications, have, as we analogically infer, the same temper of heart. For the same reason that we expect to find the lamb and the dove harmless, and the lion and tiger ferocious, through all their generations, and in all countries where they are found; we expect man to be, in the temper of his heart, the same in all ages and in all nations. When we have settled the point that the human family are all of one species, analogy so far decides the truth of our doctrine, as to cast the burden of proof on those who venture to deny it. But there is on this subject more direct and positive testimony. I would then remark,

2. That we can hardly fix our eye on any individual or community of antiquity, but we can find its exact resemblance, in some individual or community with whose character we are familiar. I shall make my selections chiefly

from scripture history, and shall notice those whose deportment made it manifest that they were not born of God, or if otherwise, were left to act out their native character. When I look back to the family of Adam, I see in Cain the prototype of many a man born sixty centuries after him. He saw that his brother's offering was more acceptable than his own, became envious, rose from envy to anger, and gave vent to his malice in a deed that rendered him a fugitive and a vagabond. Now who is so ignorant of human nature as not to see in society men of precisely the same description in the present day; men who covet another's distinctions, and from coveting become malicious, and would destroy, if human law did not interfere, the object of their spleen. Every generation and every country gives birth to just such men, and they are found amid every community from the highest to the lowest order of men. Witness the whole list of duelists, from the prince who settles his quarrel in style, to the poor kidknapped African who hews to pieces his antagonist with his hoe or his scythe. When their envy does not terminate in blood, it rises often to a horrid pitch of desperation.

In the family of Jacob there was seen all that variety of evil disposition witnessed in later families. There was parental partiality, and filial impiety; there was envy, and jealousy, and pride, and revenge, and vanity, and lust, and deceit, and, finally, all the unhallowed passions, that go to poison the harmony of domestic circles in every country.

In the character of Balaam the false prophet, who pretended a high regard to the divine authority, and a sacred respect to the decisions of conscience, while yet he loved the wages of unrighteousness, and would gladly have permission of Heaven to curse the Lord's people, we have the features of many an evil mind in the present day. Like him, when they cannot do wrong conscientiously, they lay conscience aside, and proceed by the meanest measures to gratify their envy of the Lord's people. Can they bribe Heaven, or force the Bible, or plead the example of the Lord's people, to justify them, they prefer to sin conscientiously, but finally their wrath is too malicious to be restrained by the laws of decency, humanity, or honour.

Look if you please at Shimei, who cursed David in the day of his adversity, and tell me if the present age, and all countries are not filled with men of precisely the same spirit. While their neighbour is prosperous, has wealth, and power, and influence, they are the merest sycophants; but when the scale is turned, and they have nothing either to fear or hope for, they can display the meanest spirit of malevolence. They have souls the most mercenary, and no opinion of their own, till they fall in with some current of public scorn, when, all at once, they seem the most decided of all men. Who has not witnessed, when public sentiment has set in upon some good man, of whom the world was not worthy, what a multitude will then for the first time discover that he is not fit to live. Witness that most noted of all cases;—when our Lord was arrested, the very multitude, whose blind he had made to see, and whose deaf to hear, whose sicknesses he had healed, whose lepers he had cleansed, and whose dead he had raised, could immediately cry out, Crucify him, crucify him. A few hours

previous, his enemies were afraid to arrest him, because his standing was so high in the public estimation. But his character was unaltered. He did not all at once put on that unworthiness that became an excuse for their wrath. He was the same when feeding the multitude, as when hanging on the tree. Tell me, if from the time of David down to this day, society has not been thick set with men of precisely the same spirit with that miscreant who cursed the king of Judah in his flight.

I name Joab, David's chief captain, ambitious, jealous, impudent, profane, revengeful,—and ask if society is not cursed in the present day with just such men. They will retain their place, and their honours, at any expense; will violate truth, and betray confidence, and direct their stab at reputation and life; will carry revenge in their bosoms for years, and will finally violate all the laws of righteousness, and cover their souls with indelible guilt, to gratify an unbounded ambition.

Let me name one from among that sex where it grieves me to find any fault,—the wife of Ahab; and tell me, if every age and kingdom has not had its Jezebels. You remember her, as the abetter of falsehood, fraud, oppression, persecution, and crime in every varied form into which unbounded depravity could mould itself. She entailed upon her husband the horrid imputation of having done more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger, than all the kings that were before him. Now you have but to divest her of royalty and power, and you will find her likeness in every considerable group of the world's present population. She was noisy and impudent, bold and masculine, controlled her husband, guided his measures, made him avenge her quarrels, instigated him to deeds of oppression, hated all that was holy, abused the Lord's prophet, and honoured Baal, and finally was eaten of dogs, and went to her own place. Now can it be doubted but that you could find in every district of this world's population many a daughter of depravity, after her own likeness, whom you have only to vest with power, and clothe with royalty, and yoke to a weak and wicked prince, and you have another Jezebel, prepared to pollute all that is fair, and blight all that is flourishing in the Israel of God?

You may go out of Israel, and survey all nations of all ages, and you will find all that variety of character noticed in Israel, and seen in our day, and our land. You may select the worst man that has lived in any age or kingdom, or the best of all the ungodly, and you will trace his resemblance in every period and in every tribe of the human family. We allow that circumstances may favour or retard the growth, and the unbridled exercise of the passions in one nation, or at one period, more than another; but still a general comparison of this world's population, at different periods, will lead invariably to the conclusion that, "as in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man,"—that the revolutions of time have yet brought round no golden age, in which there was not displayed the same temper and disposition, and when there were not born men of the same general character. I proceed to a

3. Argument. There have prevailed in all ages and nations the same *crimes*, calling for the restraining influence of the same laws.

Men have been in all times and places inclined to wrong their fellow-men of their property. Hence fraud, theft, robbery, and oppression have been blots in the history of every people who have inhabited the globe. It will not be denied that the immediate descendants of Abraham were the most moral and civilized people of their time; yet these crimes prevailed in Israel. One would steal an ox, or a sheep, and kill it, and this vice must be restrained by the penalty of restoring five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep. Another would turn his beast into his neighbour's field and cause it to be eaten up; and must make restitution of the best of his own field. Another would remove his neighbour's landmark; in which case there must light a curse upon his head, to which all the people must say, Amen. There were those who would vex and oppress the stranger, those who would exact usury, those who would take in pledge a neighbour's raiment, those who would not pay the tithes that God had enjoined, those who would take a bribe, who would follow the multitude to do evil, who would profane the Sabbath, who would bear false witness, who would covet a neighbour's wife, or ox, or field. And all these crimes prevailed, to a still greater degree, among the nations bordering upon Israel, who had not upon them the restraints of God's written law. And who will deny, that these crimes are still common? Have we not the usurer, the slanderer, the thief, the oppressor, the profane, the adulterer, and the Sabbath-breaker? Have we not in use similar laws to those which curbed to decency, and honesty, and integrity, the family of Abraham? What reason have we to assert, that a single statute in the law of Moses went to restrain a crime that has since then become obsolete? Hence what reason to believe, that human nature has become better? What reason to believe, that the descriptions of depravity which applied to Israel, Babylon, Egypt, Syria, and Sidon, or even to Sodom, will not apply with equal propriety to the men of this land, and of all lands, and all generations, when circumstances favour the growth and the practice of the same vices? "As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man." I draw my

4. Argument from the fact, that the Bible has never become obsolete. It describes men of other periods, and the description suits the present generation. Some parts of the Bible describe men as they acted three and four thousand years ago; other parts, as they conducted eighteen hundred years since; and it informs us how men will act down to the end of time. Now, sinners in the present day, soon as they gain some knowledge of themselves, find a faithful description of their hearts in the same Bible. It proves, wherever there is a spirit of self-application, "a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." We have sometimes seen persons greatly astonished, to find, all at once, that they had in their house a neglected book, that could tell them all the secrets of their hearts. And this circumstance has not unfrequently persuaded them that the Bible was written by the finger of God.

But if human nature has gradually become better, as some would pretend to believe; if the awful descriptions of depravity given us in the Bible would suit only the generations or communities, of whom they were origi-

ginally given, the book would not seem adapted, as it does, to men as they now feel and conduct. When the unregenerate world shall have become as much better, as it has become quite fashionable to believe, the Bible will be no longer adapted to our condition. It will not then be a light to our feet and a lamp to our path. I can believe that the *spirit* of the divine law will be in force in heaven, but that detail of the law, found in the Bible, and adapted to a race of sinful and polluted men, must go into disuse when there shall be born a race free from entire depravity. The Bible was intended to follow men into the labyrinths of vice, and there warn, and admonish, and threaten, and reprove. Hence when men shall not thus run into sin, they will need, and God will inspire them, a new Bible. It was intended to block up the way of death, and save men from destroying themselves; but when men shall no longer love to tread the way to perdition, the Bible will not be the book they will need, and God will recall his word, and give the world other instructions, adapted to their altered and better condition. Hence whatever evidence we have that the Bible is still the very book we need, we have equal testimony that men are by nature depraved, as they ever were. For if the civil law of Moses would suit well the present generation, though written more than three thousand years since; and if the Prophecies and the Psalms written five and seven hundred years later, are descriptive of just such men as we are; and if the Gospels and the Epistles, of still later date, seem adapted to the moral character of the present generation; with what face can men assert that their native heart has changed at all its character? Must not the honest man believe still, that, "as in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man"?

I close with remarks.

1. We see one source of those corruptions of doctrine with which the world is filled. Men have determined that human nature has grown better, and that men are born now very different beings from the antediluvians, or the Jews, or the Romans, or the whole Gentile world in the time of our Lord. Having settled this point, independently on the divine testimony, they infer that the same Bible will not suit the different ages and nations: that what God would say to the ignorant, barbarous beings that once peopled the world, he would not say to the present enlightened and polished nations of Christendom. Thus one error has conducted to another. They have been led, by the deceitfulness of their hearts, to believe one lie, and then, to be consistent, must believe another. Had they but correct views of their own hearts, they would believe that the same book, which lashed the consciences of sinners two thousand years ago, is still the best book for us that God could inspire, and that it needs no altering. This *is* the opinion of awakened sinners. When God makes men acquainted with themselves, the Bible looks them through, as if an omniscient eye was fixed in the centre of every page; and it needs then no mutilations and amendments. O, would those who think they see an inappropriateness in the Bible doctrines, look once into their own hearts, that look would be a sovereign antidote to their heterodoxy; and the Bible would soon be found appropriate and precious. They would patiently read its most doleful pages, and trace,

with moistened eye, its portraits of human depravity; discovering every feature of themselves in its most darkened lines. In the character of the old world, and of the Sodomites, in Paul's description of the Gentiles, and in the character of Judas, they would see no touch of the divine pencil too dark for a delineation of their own carnal mind. It would rather seem as if the whole had been intended to pourtray their own likeness, in the fairest colours that truth could use. Their proud brow would gather sadness, their heart would sicken, and falling down into the dust, they would cover their faces and cry, Unclean! unclean! Wo is unto me!

2. The subject justifies a kind of preaching, as plain and pointed as any thing found in the law of God, or in the communications of Christ and his apostles. Those who have anathematized a discriminating, bold, and plain exhibition of truth, have all gone upon the mistaken presumption, that men, as the ages have revolved, have gradually bleached their moral character. They have no idea, that were the Lord Jesus to visit the earth again, he would denounce us as a sinful and adulterous generation, or address the very worst of men as serpents, and a generation of vipers, hardly escaping the damnation of hell;—he would not *now* say "that the whole world lieth in wickedness," and that "except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God;"—the ignorant and barbarous Jews needed to be born again; as also some of the less civil among the Romans, and a few of the more unlettered among the Grecians; but the term has no meaning in an enlightened congregation in America.

But all this is false and mischievous. Men have just such hearts as they always had; and need a gospel as plain and pungent as that preached by the Lord Jesus. The old serpent needs to be dislodged *now* from his usurped throne and dominion, by the same coarse weapons, if you please to call them such, as were used eighteen hundred years ago. We may dream that we are conversant with celestial beings; that our hearers are all in a fair way for heaven; but while we are amusing them, they may, one by one, steal away to their death-bed, and from thence to a bed in hell. And what minister of Christ would not rather make them feel unhappy all the way to perdition, than find at last, that, while he has been preaching a smooth and polished gospel, one soul has been lost for ever through his negligence?

Every unregenerate man in this assembly has, in the view of Heaven, the same moral character with those who vexed the righteous soul of Noah, and Lot, and Elijah, and Malachi, and Jesus Christ, and needs to be addressed in the same plain, and pungent, and discriminating style. Why should totally depraved men wish any other gospel than that prepared for the totally depraved? What other gospel can reach their case, and alarm them, and save them? How cruel, if they do wish it, to amuse them with fair words, and smooth speeches, and thus prevent their hearts from aching, till their destiny is sealed. May the blessed God save his ministers from such deeds of treachery!

No, the world needs just such a gospel as was preached in Jerusalem, and Rome, and Corinth—needs to hear the thunders of the same law that issued from the smoke of Sinai, and to see the vivid flashes that glared upon

its summit. Not enough better has the world become to admit the softening down of one accent of those denunciations that fell from the lips of Jesus. And he who thinks otherwise, has only to look around him, and within him, and see how the human heart belches forth its moral corruption, poisoning domestic and social joy, and contaminating every district of this unfortunate and ruined world. Let him attend our courts of justice, and see how men will perjure themselves; let him read the catalogue of divorces; let him spend an evening in the grog-shop; let him stop a moment at her door, whose "house is the way to hell;"* let him enter one of our criminal prisons; let him penetrate once into the secrets of his own heart, and stay there till the light is let in; and if he shall then wish any other gospel than the one he has, we will unite with him in beseeching the Eternal to take back his terrible communications.

3. The subject furnishes ungodly men the means of knowing their own characters. They have but to read the history of the world, and learn what sort of beings once peopled it, and that history is the mirror in which they can see themselves. We do not say that every two unregenerate men are alike in their exterior; but we assert, on the testimony of God, that every two unregenerate hearts, have, in the view of God, the same moral character. Hence the most decent of the ungodly may look at the most abandoned, and learn exactly what themselves would be, were God to remove all restraint. Hence spake our Lord of whited sepulchres, that appeared beautiful indeed without, but within were full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. And he elsewhere assures us, He that has been angry with his brother without a cause, though he may not have spilt the blood of any man, is a murderer; and he who has cast a lascivious look, is an adulterer; and he who has not paid his tithes, has robbed God. Thus Heaven looks at the marrow and the pith of character; and if men would know themselves, they must be willing to be measured by the same rule.

4. We argue from this subject, that men must all pass the same second birth to fit them for the kingdom of God. The whited sepulchre, as well as that which is neglected and decayed, needs to be cleansed *within*, else it remains full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. The best man among all the unregenerate is a great sinner, and must become greatly ashamed, and must hate sin, and must put his trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, or he must be as surely shut out of heaven as the vilest man that breathes. Men, we know, may do different degrees of mischief; one may draw sin with cords of vanity, and another with a cart-rope; and still both may, with equal assurance, be pronounced on the way to hell. And in that world, it is not denied, that there may be different degrees of torment; but it is denied, that either the better sinner or the worse can escape perdition, unless he be born again. Hence it becomes every man, honourable or mean, to be inquiring, what he must do to be saved. The man who stupidly imagines that any elevation of character raises him above the necessity of repenting, and of taking a believing grasp of the atonement by Jesus Christ, has mistaken his own character, and is blind to

* Prov. vii. 27.

his approaching destiny. He may compass himself about with sparks of his own kindling, and walk in the light of his own fire, but shall have this at the hand of God, that he shall lie down in everlasting sorrow. Haste then, ye very best of the ungodly, and be found at a Saviour's feet, that ye may have life through his name. If the world esteems you a benefactor, and you can see no fault in yourself, still you must be born again, or die in your sins, and where Christ is, can never come.

Finally, We see why there need be but one place of destiny in the coming world for all the unregenerate. The little shades of difference that now appear in the ungodly, are too insignificant to mark them out for distinct worlds. When God takes off those restraints that now make unholy men differ, they will be so much alike, that none will impeach his justice when he assigns them all the same outer darkness, the same gnawing worm, and the same quenchless fire. He that has stolen his neighbour's property, and died a felon, and he who has concealed the article found in the street, or the mistake made in his favour, or has purposely become a bankrupt, to escape the obligations of honesty, will appear too much alike in the judgment, to require any material diversity in their final sentence. The same perdition will suit them both, though one drops down to hell from the gallows, and the other is borne there on a downy bed. The duelist and the assassin, the usurer and the pickpocket, the foresworn and the profane, the wine-bibber and the sot, the fashionable adulterer and the inmate of the brothel, must be seen to differ so little when God shall tear away the fictitious drapery from the more honourable sinner, that it will seem no incongruity to place them at last in the same hell. God will consider his law as openly violated, and his authority as egregiously insulted, by the man who sinned in accordance with public sentiment, as by the man who did his deeds of depravity in full and open violation of the civilities and customs of human society. Men make wide distinctions where God will make none. Hence the same condemnatory sentence, the same prompt execution of it, the same place of punishment, the same duration of misery, and the same total despair, will be the destiny of the patrician and the plebeian transgressor. Does the man die out of Christ, this is enough; no matter whether he was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day, or went to perdition a beggar or a slave. It will be the same thing to God; and for all the millions who repent not, he will build but one hell. Perhaps the meanness and coarseness of his associates may prove at last, to the more accomplished sinner, an ingredient in his cup of misery that shall more than counterbalance the honours and the pride, which, in this life, gave him his fictitious elevation above the vulgar transgressor. Could I make my puny voice be heard, I would thunder this sentiment through all the ranks of elevated crime, till the highest prince should find his adulterous bed a couch of thorns, till the honourable murderer should feel in his own bosom "the arrows of the Almighty,"* and till the boldest in blasphemy and the meanest in knavery should fear alike the same award, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels."

* Job, vi. 4.

SERMON XXI.

By DANIEL A. CLARK, A. M.

PRACTICAL TEST OF LOVE OR ENMITY TO GOD.

Malachi, i. 6.—*A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a Father, where is mine honour? and if I be a Master, where is my fear?*

This address was made to the priests of the Lord, at a very corrupt age of the Jewish church; and applies not only to them, but to the whole family of Israel. There was corruption, not merely in the priesthood: the whole church was exceedingly polluted. Every precept of the law was violated, and every rite of the sanctuary perverted. Hence most of the addresses made to them apply, not to believers, but to impenitent men, and that in all ages, and in all countries. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself," would seem a strange address to true believers; but is exactly suited to a community of hypocrites, whose profession of godliness embraced all the holiness they aimed to acquire.

It will then be no violation of the spirit of the text, if we apply it to an impenitent world, embracing those who have no show of godliness, as well as the whole family of false professors.

We find in the lips of many who make no pretensions to a change of heart, high profession of respect for the character and government of God. They claim him as their Father, and would have us believe that they respect and obey his laws. It will be my object in this discourse to inquire, WHETHER MEN OF THIS CHARACTER YIELD HIM THAT FILIAL ESTEEM, OR THAT DUTIFUL SUBJECTION, WHICH ARE DUE TO A FATHER AND A MASTER. That the subject, however, may impress our minds the more tenderly, let us,

I. *Contemplate the government of God, and see if we can discover him dealing with all his rational creatures as a Father and a Master.*

1. In the first place, as a Father and a Master *he protects them.* This the son and the servant expect. God keeps his eye upon all his intelligent creatures, and puts underneath them his arm of mercy. Not an hour would life be sustained, did not Jehovah keep in tune this wondrous frame; did he not heave the lungs, move the heart, and brace every member and every nerve. Dangers stand thick around us, wait at every corner to destroy us, but are warded off by that unseen Intelligence, "in whom we live and move and have our being." The unbeliever as well as the believer, holds his life, his reason, his health, and all his comforts as a loan of Heaven. While he neglects to pray, and while every mercy is forgotten in unthankfulness; while he ever sets his mouth against the heavens, and defies the Power that protects him; still, with paternal vigilance, God extends to him his protecting mercy. He lies down and sleeps and wakes because the Lord makes him to dwell safely.

2. As a Father and a Master *he provides for all his creatures.* That bread which men feed upon, as the fruit of their own industry, and for which *they thank themselves*, and every garment that covers them, and the house

that shelters them, are the gifts of God. No man could make his seed vegetate, or render his fields fertile, or ensure success in trade, independently on his Maker. The showers and the dews, the genial sun, and the soft breezes of heaven are entirely under divine control, and unite their influence to feed, and clothe, and warm, and give health and vigour to an apostate world. Thus, as a Father and a Master, he makes timely and kind provision for all his creatures.

3. As a Father and a Master *he makes us know his will.* We have some lessons of instruction from the fields of nature; but in his word he has opened all his heart; has made every duty plain, and placed it in the power of every son and servant of his to do his pleasure. He has plainly revealed himself and his will concerning us. He has made us acquainted with his Son and his kingdom. If disposed to obedience, we have nothing to do but to obey. And that his family of intelligences might have no excuse from marching up promptly to their duty, he has caused his word to be proclaimed in a preached gospel. Thus we have line upon line, and precept upon precept. All this we expect from a father or a master.

4. I add, *he has made our duties light.* The service he requires is pleasant and easy. He demands what is to our own interest, and prohibits what would ruin us. His law, in all its rigour, is a most kind and benevolent institution, and has conferred upon his family the richest comforts and the greatest obligations. Next to the Gospel, the Law of God is the richest bequest of Heaven to our world; and they were both issued with the same design—to render intelligent beings happy in the enjoyment of their Maker.

Finally, if we obey him, he smiles upon us, and provides for our *future happiness* as does a father and a master. The law itself, which he had a *right* to issue *without a promise of reward*, implies that the dutiful shall be happy. He approves of every act of duty, and will notice it with his favour even if we give to the thirsty a cup of cold water, from love to him. When we have sinned, and are desirous to return to duty, he accepts our repentance, forgives us, and loves us. Thus he acts the part of a kind Father, and an indulgent Master toward all his intelligent creation. And many whose hearts have never been won to love and duty, are still sensible that God is kind, and deserves their warmest esteem, and faithful service. But after all this we hear Him say, "If then I be a Father, *where is mine honour?*"

II. *Let us inquire how a kind and dutiful son or servant will treat a father or a master.*

I yoke the two together, because if faithful and dutiful, they will exhibit in these different relationships, very much the same deportment.

1. In the first place, the son *loves* his father, and the good servant his master. The attachment is very strong; and perhaps often as strong in the one case as in the other. You have seen servants who would die to protect their master; and the attachment of a good son to his father none will question. Let us then inquire whether that class of men who acknowledge that they have not been regenerated, but who wish to be considered very friendly to their Maker, do really feel any love to his character. While they are made the recipients of his bounty, they may feel glad, and may mistake

gladness for gratitude. Or viewing his favours as an evidence of his love to them, they may feel that complacency in themselves which may seem like affection for him. Or making some essential mistake in their views of his character, they may love the image they have set up, and which they call Jehovah. Or being grossly ignorant of his character, they may never feel their hearts drawn out toward him, in any very strong affection or passion, and so may not know that they do not love him. Or these things may all combine to deceive and ruin them.

If we have any love to God we must love his whole character, and must learn his character from the Bible. We must not only love the Being who waters our fields, and makes the earth fruitful, and the air salubrious; who supplies us with health and plenty; but the Being, (for he is the same,) who sends drought, and famine, and pestilence; who cuts off our comforts, and sends disease, and death, and darkness, and sorrow into our habitations. We must not only love him, who created us, who protects us, who feeds us, who enlightens us, and who offers us salvation; but him who gave us his law, gave that law its sanctions, and annexes to a rejection of the Gospel the sure pledge of endless misery. We must not only love the Being who has watched the world with paternal solicitude, and has given to the different nations their prosperity and their honours; but him, (for he is the same God,) who blotted out the old world, who burned the cities of the plain, who has plagued the kingdoms of men with revolutions, earthquakes, storms, and wars. We must not only love him who has built a heaven for redeemed sinners, but him who has digged a bottomless pit, and kindled a quenchless fire for the finally impenitent. We cannot love the Author of all good, and hate him as the Author of what we call evil. There is but one God, and he assures us that he makes light, and creates darkness. We must vest him with all his attributes, and love him as a whole Deity, or he will spurn our affection, and count us his enemies. He is as worthy of esteem in the exercise of holiness, justice, truth, and vengeance, as when he displays his infinite goodness and mercy. His threatenings do him as much honour as his promises. His plagues are as necessary as his blessings, his lightnings as his rains, his Law as his Gospel, his prison as his palaces. His rod and his bread are both blessings to his children and his servants.

Now the question is, do that class of men who speak so highly of their Maker, and who would have us believe that they are so grateful for his benefits, and have pleasure in contemplating his character, but who have no pretensions to having passed the new birth—do they love the whole of the divine character? Have they selected the attributes of their supreme Deity from the Bible, and do they disrobe him of no single perfection? Is the view the Bible gives of Jehovah pleasant to them in all its parts? Would they not alter one single trait if they might? Have they no exceptions to make, when they think of him, and speak of him, and pray to him? And when they think of going to be in his presence for ever, is his character exactly such as they would love to contemplate and to dwell with?

I know that some of these questions, at moments, are trying even to the be*liever; but he* does hope, that he approves of every attribute in the character

of Jehovah. But do not that class of men, to whom this sermon is principally addressed, manifest, that they are pleased with only *a part* of the divine character? Hence how frequently will they deny such of the doctrines as clash with their views of God. Total depravity is viewed as rendering them too deformed for him to love till they are radically changed. The necessity of such a change begets a doubt whether they are on the way to heaven. The deity of Christ argues, that men are in a state of fearful ruin from which none but an almighty Redeemer can rescue them. The necessity of a divine influence to change the heart, cuts off the hope which they build on their own good works, as qualifying them for heaven. Any divine purpose respecting the heirs of salvation, places their destiny in the hands of God; where they are afraid to trust it. His sovereignty in regenerating whom he will, leaves it doubtful whether their purposes of future repentance will be executed. Threatenings of everlasting misery to the finally impenitent, exhibit God as too inflexibly holy to be their Jehovah.

Do they not dread these doctrines because they undermine their high opinion of themselves, and in their view mar the character of God? If they loved him, they would have confidence in him; they would believe what he says, would dare to be in his hands, would have no fear of his decrees, nor be apprehensive of too great severity in his justice.

The child, when he is received into the arms of his father, asks from him no promise that he will not cast him into the fire or the flood. If he knows that his father has written his last testament, he has no fear that he is disinherited: and the faithful servant has the same confidence.

2. The good child loves the *society* of his father, and the faithful servant loves to be with his master. Every one has observed that love will thus operate. If then God be a Father, where is his honour? Do men in their native state love to be with God. The believer will know what I mean by being with God. There is a sense in which God is every where; but a special sense in which he is present with his people. Communion with him is as much a reality as communion with a friend. In a friend we do not *see* that spirit with which we hold fellowship. When it has fled, still all that we saw is present, but communion is at an end. God's people have endearing fellowship with him, and there is no blessing which they prize so highly. In the family, in the closet, in the sanctuary, and in the field, they mingle their souls with the great Spirit, and are happy. The ordinances are appointed for this purpose. One day spent in his courts is better than a thousand elsewhere.

But the men we have described—do they understand the nature, and estimate the privilege of this fellowship? They think they love their Maker, and are displeased if we question their piety; but do they seek communion with him? Are they men of prayer, and accustomed to the work of praise? Do they love retirement and meditation? Do they pore much over the page of inspiration, and do they cultivate a spirit of devotion? All this is to be expected of one who loves to be with God. A few transient thoughts of him as a Benefactor are not a sufficient testimony of supreme attachment. God commands more than this, and if we are his chil-

dren, or his servants, we shall desire more. Else what is meant when we are commanded to "pray without ceasing"? And what does David mean when he says, "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God"? Or Job, when he says, "O that I knew where I might find him; that I might come even to his seat"? Now a religion that produces none of all this—that never thirsts after God, nor grieves on account of his absence—is to be suspected as radically deficient. It may serve to deceive, but will never save.

3. A good son and a faithful servant will be *cheerfully obedient*. A dutiful temper is indispensable in either of these stations. The son who does not cheerfully receive and execute the wishes of his father is unworthy of the name, and deserves to be disinherited. And the servant who does not exhibit the same dutiful temper is a mere slave. Let us then apply this test to that class of men who are addressed in the text. Is it their joy to obey the Lord? They will then attend well to his commands. They will read and meditate upon his law, and will make his word the man of their counsel, and will study to obey. Is this the fact? Are they employed in studying ways and means to glorify God, and make mankind happy? Do they discharge with conscientious fidelity all the duties of their respective offices and relations? Are they among the first to feed the poor, instruct the ignorant, reform the vicious? What they would that others should do to them, do they make this the rule of their own conduct? And are they *uniform* in their regard to duty? Do they yield God the service he requires? and exhibit that respect to his name, his word, his worship, and his Son, which he enjoins? Or, to express the whole in a few words, have they a tender conscience, which fears to do wrong, fears to neglect a duty, fears to violate an obligation, dreads the least deviation from the most perfect rectitude? Such a conscience is, of all others, the most decisive test of a holy mind. "If ye love me, keep my commandments." "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye do whatsoever I command you." We may then safely rest the matter here; if men conscientiously regard all that God has spoken as immediately binding upon their consciences and their conduct,—believe them pious; but if they say but little, and care but little, about duty, we must retain all our fears.

4. The son and the servant will each be attached to his father's or his master's *family*. If a child or a servant be unhappy at home, it is an omen of evil, an evidence of some unhappy alienation of affection. If we apply this test to the characters addressed in the text, what is the result? Do they attach themselves to the family of Christ? Do they love his disciples, and choose them as their inmates, and hold sweet counsel with them, and wish their society for ever? And is their attachment stronger to those who are eminently holy than to others? If we love God, we shall love those most who wear most prominently the marks of his image. With them we shall wish to be identified in a compact, strong and eternal. Hence to hope that we love the Redeemer, while we stand aloof from his family, is absurd. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." *Hence generally* we shall find the people of God in a cluster. We may

find a few strayed from the family, but we shall find them uneasy and unhappy till they come and take their place in his house.

5. The servant and the son are very *jealous of the honour* of their father or their master. They will not hear him reproached; they separate themselves from his enemies, and from the place where he is not honoured. And all this God expects from those who acknowledge him as their Father or their Master. But do we discover this delicacy of feeling in that class of men who would be esteemed religious, but who have no pretensions to a change of heart? Are they grieved to hear the name, and attributes, and works of the Lord spoken lightly of? Do they retire from the sound of profaneness, and feel themselves abused, if men in their presence will not reverence Jehovah? It must be proper to bring every man's religion to this test. You would esteem no man your friend who could stay, and be content, when he heard you abused. Mere silence in him, while others abused you, would evince that his friendship was deceitful. Now God has assured us that "he is a jealous God;" of course he will watch the smallest deviations from propriety in those who would be thought to love him. The man who would smile at an oath, or carry on conversation with one who was profane, and show no disapprobation, will find it difficult to prove that he is grieved when God is dishonoured, and will forfeit his claim to piety. One has not a keener sense of the touch of fire, than of any contact with profaneness, after he has been sanctified by the grace of God.

Finally, the kind son and the dutiful servant will wish to have *others acquainted* with their father and their master. Their own attachment is so strong, that they conceive nothing more to be necessary, than that his character should be known, in order to his being loved and respected. Apply this test, if you please, to that class of men who have no pretensions to having been regenerated, but who still insist upon it that they love God and are friendly to his government and kingdom. Do they wish to extend the knowledge of God to others? Are they grieved that so small a portion of the human family have the sacred volume, and that those who have it know so little of its contents? Do we find them among the first to propagate the gospel? Are they deeply interested in the great work that is at present going on in the Christian world? Do they rejoice at every new translation of the scriptures? And are they ready to contribute of their wealth to propagate the truth? All this must follow a strong attachment to God. And if things be otherwise with those who hope that they love him, there is somewhere a radical mistake. If men love the God of the Bible, they will wish others to have the Bible, that they may know and love the same God. If they doubt the truth of the scriptures, and are attached merely to some being whom they style the God of nature, then indeed they may feel indifferent whether men have any other than the book of nature. But this is deism precisely, and men would be ashamed, in the present day, to advocate a system that is becoming obsolete. In fact, there is no God of nature, but the God of the Bible. He who built the hills and built the sun, inspired the book of grace, and is the only God who can save in the hour of distress. Why should we deceive ourselves with a scheme which is rotten,

or be content that others should trust their souls to some Jupiter or Moloch, that never had any existence but in the imagination of such as did not like to retain God in their knowledge?

My dear hearers, we must come to the conclusion (and the sooner the better) that there is no religion without a change of heart. "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." We must have that same religion which has brought others to their knees, and borne them to the place of prayer, and cut them off from the men of the world, and rendered them men of faith and of devotion, or we must die without any, and perish in our delusions. Religion cannot be shaped to please a carnal mind—cannot be brought down to the frigid taste of unsanctified men. It has remained the same in all ages, and will continue to demand a temper which unsanctified men do not feel, and a conduct which they do not exhibit.

We are the more anxious to do good to that class of men who have been brought into view, because we see many excellences in their character. They are neither intemperate, profane, nor false; they are civil, and decent, and kind, and hospitable; they are often public-spirited. Hence true religion would place them among the *first* on the list of useful men. We grieve to see them lack this one thing needful, because it prevents their usefulness, and mars their happiness.

But we are anxious for another reason, which must not be concealed. We think they are entirely mistaken in their hopes of future happiness. We fear their death-bed will be a scene of stupidity, or of horror. We apprehend, (and if we are deceived still we are honest,) that they are in imminent danger of being lost for ever. Their religion has too little to do with a Saviour; it nourishes too high an opinion of works; it is too frigid, too thoughtless, too prayerless; it is too much afraid of the cross; is not sufficiently humble, watchful, circumspect, heavenly-minded. We fear it is not the religion of the gospel, and will avail them nothing in the last day. We think it important that they examine their hopes, before it be too late; and if they find that they have not a religion which will stand the test of the last day, they should bow immediately to the Lord Jesus Christ. Why should men intrench themselves in a refuge of lies, to be demolished by the hail of the last day, and leave them unsheltered in the midst of that fearful storm?

If God be a Father, honour him. Devote your life to him, and yield him your richest, best affections. Be ashamed of no duty which he requires; shrink from no sacrifice he demands; and let the world know that you are not ashamed of your Father.

If he be a Master, honour him. Make his law your study, and consider his service your freedom. Then you will at last hear him say to you, "Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." It will then be your privilege and your honour to serve him in some more elevated sphere of usefulness for ever.

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SERMON XXII.

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THE REPENTANCE OF PETER.

MARK, xiv. 72.—*When he thought thereon, he wept.*

THE most trifling occurrences often preach the most solemn and effectual sermons. In the hands of the Spirit of God, one instrument may be as powerful as another. Through his energy, the weakest instrument has often awakened a stupid conscience, melted a hard heart, restored a thoughtless backslider, saved a perishing soul. How simple the occurrence that brought the ungrateful Peter to reflection. Thousands might have heard that morning clarion with perfect indifference; but it revealed to him a night of guilt, and overwhelmed his soul with sorrow. The shrill voice was, by the Spirit of God, made piercing as a two-edged sword; for while it vibrated on his ear, "Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice: and, when he thought thereon, he wept." Awakened as from a dream, he reflected on his guilt, and was penitent.

The subject which I would introduce to your attention by these remarks is, THE RECOVERY OF THE FALLEN PETER. Your attention is particularly invited to the *Method*, and the *Effects*, of his recovery.

I. We are to consider then, in the first place, the *Method* in which Peter was recovered from his fall.

The fall itself shall not come particularly under our notice. I here presume on the fact, that my hearers are acquainted with the melancholy event so fully described by the inspired historians. After his mistaken zeal had expended itself in one inefficient blow of the sword, (for which he received the merited rebuke of Christ,) we see him cowardly retiring. We see him following "afar off" the ferocious band, as they conduct the captive Jesus to the palace of the high priest. On their arrival there, we find him, in the hall, and in the porch, openly denying his persecuted Lord; and aggravating his falsehood with angry cursing and the most impious perjury. While viewing him in this dreadful alienation from Christ and God, we make the inquiry, *How* was it that he ever became again a willing follower of Jesus? In what *method* was he restored to love and serve his forsaken Master?

To the question, the first answer which arises is, that he was restored by *divine power*.

Christ had prayed to God, before his disciple had fallen into this hapless condition, that his "faith might not fail." This merciful Advocate, attentive to the minutest wants of his people, never intercedes for them in vain. God has promised that his "people shall be willing in the day of his power." The promised Spirit shall search out the friendless alien, on whom God has set his love, and bring him, an adopted child, into the family of Christ. The same Spirit shall wing, with unerring aim, the dart of conviction to the conscience of every backslider, and bring the humbled victim back to Christ for healing. That Spirit bowed the heart of Peter. Nothing but the divine power could arrest the streams of iniquity that were then flowing from his breast, and open there a living fountain of holiness springing up into everlasting life.

But our question leads us to examine the *means* which God used in his restoration. Divine power is not employed in the work of salvation without a wise use of means. To the question, considered in this light, our text suggests the proper answer. Peter was recovered from his fall, by means of *reflection* and *penitence*. He *thought* on his crime, "and, when he thought thereon, he *wept*."

1. The first step, then, in restoring the fallen Peter, was *exciting him to reflection*.

The God of nature has wisely endued us with the power of reflection, or the faculty of memory. By this, we are enabled to increase our knowledge; which must otherwise be confined exclusively to present objects. By this only we can reap benefit from past experience, and derive maxims of practical wisdom. What I saw, felt, or did, yesterday, I am enabled by memory to reflect upon to-day, and thence draw conclusions, which may be useful to me in my present and future conduct.

Reflection is the best means of ascertaining our hearts; for the object of reflection presents one unvaried aspect. When I would seek for my heart in present conduct, it is continually eluding my search. When retracing it, however, in a path which it has already taken, there can be no deception. I can decide respecting the heart in past conduct, too, *impartially;* for I now have opportunity to exercise different feelings, in the judgment I pass, from what I did in the action; while the feelings which prompt to present conduct, preclude me from the possibility of judging without prejudice.

God employed this power of reflection in restoring Peter. The crowing of the cock, and the expressive look which, at the same time, Christ cast on Peter, by the power of association, called memory into exercise. By this concurrence of circumstances, he was forcibly reminded of "the word which Jesus said unto him," the preceding evening. That evening Christ had been engaged in holy intercourse with the twelve. The

gracious Shepherd was about to lay down his life for the sheep; and he knew, that, according to the predictions of divine truth, it would be a time of sore trial to his disciples. The sheep should be scattered, when their Shepherd was smitten. His tender regard to the welfare of Peter, particularly, beams in the warning which he gave him of his fall; and toward all the disciples, in the discourses and prayers with which he occupied the eventful season. Peter reflected on this sweet intercourse —these endearing expressions of Christ's love.

He thought, too, of his own rash *promises*—"Lord, although all shall be offended, yet will not I." "Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison and to death." "Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee."

He thought likewise on his *conduct*. How he began to fail through want of watchfulness, and neglect of prayer, when, in company with James and John, he beheld his Master, in agony of soul in the garden.—How, after experiencing such love from his Master and promising such love on his own part, he, in the hour of Christ's agony, could even fall asleep, and incur the severe rebuke, "Couldst thou not watch one hour!" How, through neglect of watchfulness and prayer, he had so far yielded to temptation as, at the approach of danger, to think of his own strength, rather than divine, and to rely on the sword, rather than the arm of God:—and how, when Christ had refused to employ power to rescue himself, he wholly gave up the cause, as lost; and with the cause, his regard to the person of Jesus; and, at the inquiry of a servant-maid, denied having been his disciple; and, on the repetition of the question, grew wrathful and profane, before multitudes, and within the hearing of Christ. By reflection, Peter looked up from these depths of degradation, to the high summit, he so recently occupied, of communion with Jesus, and wept. Which leads us to observe,

2. The next step in his recovery, was *penitence*.

Willingness to reflect on our past lives is not itself reformation; though it is a necessary step in the work. Reflection in itself is merely a speculative act; an exercise of the head, which may be united either with proper or improper feelings of heart. By itself, therefore, it does not determine whether the accompanying exercises of the heart be sinful or holy. To be effectual in reclaiming from sin, it must be accompanied with suitable emotions of heart. Such emotions were excited by the reflections of Peter. While he thought on his crime, his heart burst within him with bitter sorrow. Reflecting Peter was penitent. In the language of the sacred historian, "he went out and wept bitterly." Grief seeks to be alone and to vent its feelings in secret. The emotions, which swelled the heart of reflecting Peter, broke it; and he "went out" of the palace—he retired from the multitude who were persecuting his Master, and in whose iniquity he could no longer participate—freely to pour out

his griefs before the eye that seeth in secret. Far different were his emotions from those which were harassing, at nearly the same time, the breast of reflecting Judas. That man felt the agony of guilt: Peter, the sorrow of love.

His penitence was his *recovery*. True penitential sorrow exhibits a heart touched with love to Christ. Such grief flows from evangelical motives; and a temper swayed by these motives, is a temper of fidelity to Christ. So soon as they touch the heart of a rebel, Christ has gained a new subject to his kingdom: so soon as they melt the heart of a backslider, Christ has restored a wanderer to his fold. Peter denying Christ, had left his first love. Peter weeping bitterly, was repenting, and doing his first works. His evangelical sorrow was a clear expression that he detested his crime: and the piercing eye of Christ, which accurately surveys the emotions of all hearts, saw in it the evidence of returning loyalty.

II. Our next inquiry respected the *Effects* of his recovery on his subsequent life.

These may be seen in his increased fidelity to the cause of Christ. Fidelity is always the result of genuine penitence. The mind which has been so far influenced by evangelical motives as to be sincerely grieved for sin, is prepared to be influenced by them to a course of holy obedience.

The grief of Peter was proved to be the sorrow of *love*, from the fact that it led to the *labours* of love. The result of his being left under the power of Satan, was, that he was "sifted as wheat." Let any person, after reading the account of Peter in the Evangelists, trace his subsequent biography in the Acts of the Apostles, and read his two Epistles, examining the traits of character visible in them, and he will be constrained to acknowledge, that Peter profited by his fall. He will perceive visible traces of surprising growth in grace. Though other means undoubtedly contributed to his subsequent attainments in Christian holiness, yet it is rational to suppose, that he often reflected on this sad denial of his Lord with deep and salutary regret. Increasing light would but render the awful crime more affecting; and Peter must often have looked back upon it with holy sorrow and increasing gratitude to the God of restoring grace. Recovered Peter was signalized by Christian *zeal*, *compassion*, and *humility*.

1. He was *zealous for the glory of Christ*. Peter was naturally ardent. His strong feelings, not sufficiently tempered with faith, had often hurried him into transgression. They impelled him to great lengths in his denial. Grace, however, does not exterminate the natural passions; but gives them a useful direction. He was still zealous: but his zeal was tempered by a stronger reliance on assisting grace; bent more singly on the service of Christ; founded on a juster appreciation of his

excellence; and distinguished by greater personal sacrifices in promoting his honour.

The first we see of Peter, after he left the palace weeping, is on the morning of Christ's resurrection. He is in company with the beloved disciple, and running, with eager interest, to the tomb of his Master: a proof that his affection for Christ and his followers, was not extinguished. Next, we see him, with a few disciples, on the sea of Tiberias; and at the sight of his Lord on the shore, with characteristic impetuosity, casting himself into the sea, the more speedily to reach him. During the interview which succeeds, he is melted to grief, by the trial which Christ made of his sincerity, in repeatedly questioning his love:—"Lord," he feelingly replies, "thou knowest all things; thou *knowest* that I love thee."

His zeal for the honour of Christ was apparent, afterwards, in the openness with which he espoused the doctrines and precepts of the gospel. He who trembles to own Christ before a servant at the palace, a few days after boldly defends his cause before assembled thousands. On the day of Pentecost; at the temple after healing the cripple; and before the council of the high priest and elders, who had charged him not to teach in the name of Jesus; he successively testifies to the exalted character of Christ, and to their awful guilt in denying and murdering the Lord of life and glory. The council "marvel at his boldness and take knowledge of him that he has been with Jesus." When beaten by them, he goes forth rejoicing that he is "counted worthy to suffer shame" for Christ. In his zeal, he spares no sin aimed against the honour of his Master. He treats with peculiar indignation the sin by which he fell. To the Jews he says, in language which fell with double force from *his* lips, "Ye *denied* him in the presence of Pilate." "Ye *denied* the Holy One, and desired a *murderer* to be granted unto you, and killed the Prince of Life." In his Epistle, also, he speaks of "false teachers, bringing in damnable heresies, even *denying* the Lord that bought them." The most unequivocal expression of ardent attachment to his Lord, however, is found in the fact, that he spent his whole life in zealously propagating the faith, the "precious faith" of Christ.

2. Recovered Peter was also *compassionate toward his fellow men.* Nothing like sanctified suffering softens the heart to compassionate the miseries of fellow creatures. Through sufferings, Christ himself, our great High Priest, was rendered "merciful," "faithful in things pertaining to God." Our sufferings, dispose us to compassionate those especially who experience similar suffering. The troubles of Peter were *spiritual;* and they rendered him compassionate in regard to the *spiritual wants* of his brethren. The evening on which Christ foretold him of his fall and

recovery, he subjoined, "But when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."

The fresh unction he received from the Holy Spirit, when he was brought to reflection and penitence, abode with him; and impelled him to labour with faithful tenderness through life, to convert his erring kindred, the Hebrews, and to advance in piety his humble brethren in Christ.

Though he showed deep indignation at the sin of the Jews in rejecting Christ, he nevertheless displayed a tender concern for their salvation, and was eager to spread before them the messages of pardon and eternal life. The multitudes whom he had deeply pierced by his severe reproof, on the day of Pentecost, he immediately directed to the forgiving Saviour. After reproving the multitudes who witnessed the miracle performed on the lame man at the beautiful gate of the temple, for their iniquity in rejecting Christ, he added, with compassionate regard for their souls; "Brethren, I wot that through *ignorance* ye did it, as did also your rulers. Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the "times of refreshing come from the presence of the Lord."

How tender he was toward the spiritual interests of his brethren in Christ, his Epistles show. He would save them from the sin and anguish of falling as he had done. "Brethren," says he, "give all diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, ye shall never *fall*." "Beloved, seeing ye *know* these things before, beware lest *ye* also, being led away with the error of the wicked, *fall* from your own steadfastness." He exhorts them to practise that sober vigilance, through want of which he fell. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your *brethren* that are in the world. Be ye sober, and watch unto prayer." Knowing full well the trials which beset the Christian life, he directs the brethren to "pass the time of their sojourning here in fear;" and points them, both for the motive and the power, to that precious Christ, "who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." He administers consolation to them while "in heaviness through manifold temptations;" and prays, that "the God of all grace, who had called them unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after they had suffered awhile, would make them perfect" in his heavenly kingdom.

In labours and prayers, bespeaking such compassion for souls, Peter spent his life; providing also, that his instructions should be "had in remembrance after his decease;" showing love to a reclaiming and forgiving Christ, by "feeding his sheep."

3. Recovered Peter was *humble*.

Sin and consequent penitence, bring the sinner to take his proper

place—the footstool; there to acknowledge his unworthiness and dependence. Before the mercy-seat, the penitent, looking back on his past life, perceives that he *has* sinned; and he feels, therefore, indelibly fixed on himself the stigma of *unworthiness*. He sees that he *has* sinned; and finding therefore no security in himself, that he may not sin again, feels in the fact the proof of his *weakness*. Nothing like a spirit wounded with sore backsliding, will teach the sinner humility. He is then forced to look on himself, as a compound of guilt and weakness; and learns humbly to apply to the blood of Christ for pardon, and to the Spirit of Christ for strength.

To this humble frame, Peter was brought by his fall and recovery. While reflecting on his crime, he perceived that all the past love of Jesus, all his own solemn asseverations and determined resolutions, had not saved him from falling, under the power of temptation, into gross wickedness. Now he saw his heart; how vile for the past; how little to be trusted in future; how much requiring him to look continually above for strength to resist temptation. Thus was he practically taught the importance of the exhortation, which he subsequently delivered to his Christian brethren; "Be clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."

Many events in his life testify to his humility. Though, after his fall, still intrusted by Christ with the high office of feeding, as an apostle, his sheep, he thought himself worthy of nothing but the labour, the reproach, and the shame; the *glory* he gave to his Master. When the multitude were looking with reverence to him and John for performing a miracle at the temple, he openly disclaimed the power or the holiness to do it, and referred them, for its origin, to his forgiving Saviour, the exalted Jesus. When he retired from the council most unjustly beaten for serving Christ, humility taught him to rejoice, that he was "counted worthy to suffer" for the Lord he had denied. He employed the remnant of his life in the self-denying duties of the ministry; a living example of the instructions which he gave; experiencing, through humility, the preciousness of that Saviour, who was disallowed by the pride of so many of his fellow-men; "in holy conversation, looking for the coming of the day of God;" and "diligent to be then found in peace, without spot, and blameless." As further illustration of his humility, we add, that the full and most aggravated *account of his fall*, in the gospel of Mark, (which, it is universally agreed, was published under his inspection,) and probably the knowledge of the transaction which the other evangelists had, (as none of them were present to witness it,) *he furnished himself;* willing thus to be humbled for his guilt before the world. And afterwards, with a spirit truly magnanimous as well as humble, we hear him commending a younger brother, as "beloved," though he knew he had differed from him, and, in one of his Epistles, had recorded

against him a most severe rebuke.* And, still later, when he came to experience the violent death which "the Lord had showed him" by the sea of Tiberias, it is asserted by historians, that he requested his crucifiers to place his head downward on the cross; esteeming himself unworthy the honour of dying in the same posture with his Lord. Oh, how humble, how compassionate toward his brethren and the world of sinners, how zealous for the glory of Christ, lived and died this restored backslider! He thus found Christ to be "set for his fall and rising again in Israel."

Permit me, Brethren, to conclude this account of the fallen and recovered Peter, with a practical application of the truths which it suggests. And,

1. Christians may fall into grievous sin:—sin which shall wound deeply their consciences, their reputation, and the cause of their Redeemer. Though there were many palliating circumstances attending the case, which would not apply to similar transgression at the present day, yet the sin of Peter was grievous. So too was the sin of David. In view of this truth, infidels may reproach, and hypocrites may stumble; but the upright believer will be warned and fear; and the backslider be encouraged to return. The Spirit of God has thought proper to record these examples, as monuments both of human depravity and of the power of his grace; and has rendered them a means of sanctification to mulitudes of his children.

Infidels, I said, may on this account reproach religion; but, Brethren, real, cordial believers, will gladly look away from the spots which may stain the characters of Christians, to the unsullied purity and transforming efficacy of the Gospel, to the unspotted holiness of its Author, and to the imperishable and eternal glory which it reveals.

Nor will any but hypocrites draw encouragement from the case before us, to sin. They who look at the falls of Christians in order to find excuse for their iniquities, prove that they have no union of soul to Christ. The real friends of the Lord Jesus will see in such examples, themes for lamentation over the depravity of human nature, and motives for watchfulness over their own hearts, lest in an unwary hour they also should be drawn into gross sin, and crucify afresh the Lord they love. The hypocrite will look only at the fall of the Christian, and go on in his iniquities; the fallen believer will look at his recovery, and rise again to renewed obedience.

Brethren, you may fall into grievous sin.—The thought should excite you to live continually by faith on the Son of God. This is the only victory that overcometh the evil that is in the world; even our faith. There can be no safety but by living near the throne. You need to look continually above, for strength to maintain the divine life. You cannot live on past experience. You cannot trust your own heart. After all

* Gal. ii. 11. 2 Peter, iii. 15.

your refreshings from the divine presence, notwithstanding present ardent feelings and strong resolutions, if you remit the life of faith, you will not walk in uprightness. All these circumstances promised security to Peter, yet in the trying hour he fell. "Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day."

2. Christ will recover his real friends from their backslidings.

They who are united to him by holy affection, have an interest in his interceding mercy. He will pray for them, as he did for Peter, that their faith may not fail.

Brethren, while you are deeply impressed with the truth that you are liable to fall even into grievous sin—that your hearts cannot be trusted a moment with safety—live in continual dependence on Jesus, the Author and *Finisher* of faith. Make this powerful Intercessor your friend. Should you ever, in an unguarded hour, by the force of strong and sudden temptation, be hurried into sin; what but such an interest in his love can afford security, that you shall not lie for ever under the power of the Adversary?

But he will remember those who have secured an interest in his love, in the trying hour, and send them deliverance; or should he leave them awhile, to show them what is in their hearts, he will in due time restore them to reflection and penitence. "They shall not be utterly cast down, for he upholdeth them with his hand." On the awful night preceding his crucifixion, there seemed nothing before his disciple Peter, but eternal alienation of heart and the blackness of darkness for ever. Yet Christ brought him to reflect—to weep—to love; employed him for nearly thirty years, in useful service to his church on earth; and has permitted him, for more than seventeen centuries, to swell the praises of ransomed sinners around his throne. Let backsliders learn from this example to reflect on their sins, and return with mourning and weeping to the service of a pardoning God.

3. Recovery from backsliding will ever be followed by increased fidelity to Christ.

The poor penitent backslider, like Peter, feels that he has wounded his Redeemer and his own soul, too deeply, to "turn again to folly." The penitence which brings reformation is deep and pungent, embittering sin. Tears shed over sins still loved and practised, which make sin sit more lightly on the conscience, are dangerous drops. Backslidings will render, to real Christians, sin more dreadful and Christ more precious. Look at reflecting, weeping Peter, and learn true penitence. How indignant was he toward the sin by which he fell! How zealous to do away the dishonour he had put upon Christ! How eager to save the souls whom his example might otherwise have led to ruin! How humble in spirit, at the view of his unworthiness!

Here you see the truth exemplified, that "where sin abounded, grace

did much more abound;" not merely pardoning, but sanctifying grace. Backsliders, then, have much to do, to prove their penitence real.

Christian Brethren, have you no sins whereon, like Peter, to reflect, and over which to weep? Think of the years of childhood; for they were vanity. Remember the hardness you exhibited before you knew the grace of God in truth; and mourn over that thoughtless season. Think of the sins, the numerous backslidings of heart, by which you have darkened your Christian life and retarded your progress in grace; and mourn for your ingratitude to a pardoning Christ, and your unfaithfulness to covenant vows. Like Peter, too, while you weep over the past, rise, through the energy of the Holy Spirit, to increased fidelity to your Lord. Show that much is forgiven you, by loving much. Oh, what ardent zeal for Christ becomes those, who were so late in entering on his service, and who have done as yet so little! What tender compassion for souls should they exhibit, who have by their sins already ruined so many! What deep poverty of spirit ought they to possess, who have a thousand times deserved hell, and are living daily on the mercy of a forgiving God!

SERMON XXIII.

By ELEAZAR T. FITCH, A.M.

THE DUTY OF REPROOF.

Ephesians, v. 11.—*Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness; but rather reprove them.*

Works of darkness, literally, are those deeds of sin, which men would blush to commit under the light of day. But the desire of concealment which throws so many crimes, actually, into the night, characterizes, to some extent, every species of overt iniquity; and on this ground, all this class of actions are properly denominated "works of darkness,"—unfit for the light of day.

The apostle knew that his converts at Ephesus had once been addicted to such conduct, and that they were still surrounded by the children of disobedience, who were indulging in such iniquities; and in the text, he gives them counsel respecting their behaviour toward these workers of iniquity. Have no fellowship with their deeds. Never join them in their sins. Never encourage them by example. Never allow yourselves to do that which they can plausibly allege in their own justification; "but rather reprove them." Let your conduct stand forth as a sentence of condemnation against their sins. Let your opinions be known to carry with them a holy indignation against their crimes. Reprove them. Go, bear the indignation and grief of your hearts into their presence; and

tell them—when no other eye sees them but yours and your Maker's—tell them their faults to their face. Carry the expostulations of love to their ears, and with all the persuasion you can draw from the word of Christ, claim a hearing.

Such are the directions of the apostle to Christians who were surrounded by the sinful deeds of the wicked,—not only to shun the fellowship with them that would be ruinous to themselves, but to carry to them the reproof that might lead to their salvation. I learn from the words, therefore, a duty which belongs to the friends of God and virtue in all ages, when surrounded by the crimes of the wicked;—THE DUTY OF REPROOF.

In pursuing the subject I would point out some of the *methods* in which you may with propriety reprove the wicked for their sins, and mention some *considerations which may serve to enforce this duty.*

Among the methods in which you may with propriety reprove the wicked for their sins, I specify the following:—

1. By refusal to comply with their enticements.

The slightest species of reproof that can be given to sinners arises from the refusal to unite with them in their crimes. When they are grown so bold in iniquity, as to solicit the followers of Christ to come down from the heights of their profession and hopes, to unite with them in their sins and follies, the mildest reproof that can possibly be given is to return to their solicitations a prompt and decided negative. Unless the Christian can give so slight a reproof to a sinner, as to say *no*, to his enticements, the sinner will never fear reproofs from his example or his lips. Nor is there any impropriety in using with sinners this species of reproof. They have no claim on you, surely, to unite with them in their deeds of folly. You are lords over your own conduct, and may make your own choice, without saying why or wherefore to any but your Master in heaven. In the exercise of your unalienable rights, you may throw a flat denial in the face of every enticing sinner; and by it effectually say; Go thy way. When I have need of thee, I will call for thee. Obtrude not on me thy sinful schemes. Take the reproof my denial gives thee.

2. You may reprove the wicked by an *example* opposed to their practices.

A still stronger reproof is thus conveyed to the wicked by the light that is reflected upon them from examples of piety and virtue. The man who always carries with him into their society the stern front of unyielding virtue; who is known by his uniform conduct to bear in his breast sentiments of abhorrence and indignation towards crime; who shows himself so firmly attached to the government of God, and the schemes of divine benevolence, as to repel even the approaches of their solicitations; speaks, with silent and impressive eloquence, the language of reproof to their consciences. Incomparably more is done by the

heavenly light attending such reproof, than can be by all the reproofs of the tongue without it. The wicked see in such examples the mirror that reflects the glory of the Deity, the authority of his law, the excellence of virtue, the deformity of sin. They stand

"Abashed, and see how awful goodness is."

And in the midst of such exhibitions of character they pass on themselves the verdict of condemnation for their sins.

Nor is there any impropriety in bearing to the wicked this form of reproof. Your right to obey the God of heaven—to show your loyalty—no man can wrest from you. You need only be loyal and be virtuous among your companions, and the living reproof is carried home to their consciences. As it has been eloquently remarked of our republican country, that her very existence carries up a reproof to the throne of tyrants, and a refutation of all the arguments by which they would uphold arbitrary rule, so the very existence of stern piety and virtue is itself a stinging reproof to the wicked, and a loud condemnation of their guilt and folly.

3. You may reprove the wicked by direct address to their consciences.

The highest form of reproof is that of bearing to the wicked the direct expression of virtuous grief and indignation which their conduct excites in your souls. When, in refusing communion with them in their evil deeds, or in exhibiting before them virtuous examples, you tacitly convey reproof to their consciences, it may not be so apparent to them that you design particularly to reprove them for their ways; and they may neglect, on their own part, faithfully to make an application to themselves of a reproof which they share in common with many others. But when, in the spirit of meekness that disarms opposition, you go to the sinner, and pour into his ear the recital of his crimes, the complaints of injured virtue, the warnings of interceding grace; his conscience owns, in you, a messenger of God; come to administer the righteous and merciful reproofs of incensed, yet forbearing love. This direct address, is reproof that singles him out to his own conscience; and forces him to draw off his attention from the guilt of others to his own, with the irresistible application, "Thou art the man." He views his crimes through the unprejudiced feelings of a friend to virtue. Conscience is against him, and with his reprover: and there arises a mighty struggle in his mind betwixt the opposing powers of sin and virtue; a struggle which must end, either in the awful victory of guilt over conscience, or in the victory, for ever blest, of conscience over guilt.

Nor is there any impropriety in using this most powerful and most salutary form of reproof. Your tongues were given you for use; and though there are certain bounds of propriety and wisdom in the use, with respect to the age, and station, and character, and circumstances of those whom

you address, of which God has given all of you, I hope, reason and common sense enough to judge; yet these limitations of wisdom form no argument against the legitimate use. To what use can they better be appropriated than to doing good? Some may make too much of their tongues in this matter; but others, too little. Yet no man can deny you the right to use for the benefit of others this glory of your frame. You should, therefore, stand firm in this liberty wherewith God your Maker has endowed you.

With this view of the proper methods of administering reproof, I would now turn your attention to *some of the considerations which should inspire you with resolution to perform the duty.*

1. You have on your side the *authority of God.* God said, through Paul, to his children at Ephesus, while surrounded with the crimes and iniquities of the gentiles, and says in effect to his children in all ages, respecting the iniquitous among whom their lot is cast, "Reprove them." He has issued forth his warrant to all his friends in the earth to be reprovers of the vicious He has bid them take the counsels and warnings of his word, and administer the reproofs of his offended, yet waiting love, to those who are his enemies. The command has reached your ear. "Reprove them," by every method of wisdom and love. With the warrant of his authority, you are safe. He will protect you and bless you, while on his errands of mercy; and give you a mouth and wisdom which no adversary will be able to gainsay or resist. Carry home the power of religion to their hearts. "Who will harm you," if, under his authority, "ye be followers of that which is good?" Will you shrink before his enemies? Shall a face of flesh and blood move you from your purposed obedience to God? How, from so humiliating a vanquishment, can you return to the throne of grace, or appear at the throne of judgment, and face the God of all power? Have faith in God; and be strong to reprove his enemies.

2. You have on your side the *examples of all the wise and holy.*

God and all his faithful servants have ever acted as reprovers of sin. God, in the laws of his government, the arrangements of his providence, and the messages of his word, is engaged in administering solemn reproof to his enemies. The Lord Jesus, the high pattern you propose to copy into your lives, during his embassy to earth, and while dwelling among the enemies of God, was no idle spectator of those sins by which they were wounding infinite purity and goodness, and ruining themselves and others. He took the part of God against an evil world; and resisted all its temptations and offers; and held before it the unsullied light of his example and precepts to show its deformity. He addressed to its hardened sons the reproofs of indignant love,—not consulting to please himself, but to perform his duty,—till he could cry, with the prophet, unto God his Father: "The reproaches of them that reproached

thee, fell on me." The Spirit of Grace, in the mission he is accomplishing, is engaged in reproving a guilty world of sin, and in carrying home to the consciences of individual sinners the stern rebukes of God's unbending word. You are countenanced in reproving sin by all the faithful servants of God; by Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Lot, and all the patriarchs; by Moses, Elijah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and all the prophets; by Peter, James, Paul, and all the apostles; by all the friends of God, from the foundation of the world to this day, whose bodies are deposited with us, whose souls are in heaven, and whose memories are embalmed in the records of the church; and by all, in every place on earth, who are now the followers of Christ in sincerity and truth; in whose lives and on whose lips dwells the law of truth and kindness. All this cloud of worthies, with the great God at their head, have arrayed their example before you, while surrounded by the filthy conversation of the wicked, to have no fellowship with them, but boldly to reprove. Will you not then associate yourselves with this company of the worthy, in their noble deeds? How can you expect to meet their approbation, or share in their triumphs, if you enter not with them into their labours of love?

3. You have on your side the *interests of the church.*

How long will it take the professed followers of Christ to learn that they cannot maintain a neutrality in the world? that the enemies of God *are* enemies? and that the mere attempt at neutrality is a concession made them, next to base submission? Oh, how humiliating to be governed, and trampled on, and triumphed over, by the enemies of God, when a decided fidelity, and a bold reproof administered to them for their sins, would lift you high above their power, and put ten thousand to flight!

The church of God is not capable of flourishing, except as she embosoms within her that energy of holy purpose and example, and speaks forth the word of God in that tone of boldness, which administers reproof to the negligent, the worldly, the vicious, the hardened, who surround her, and who assail her peace and welfare. Arrayed in this glory, she strikes dismay into the hosts of her foes; she spreads abroad the conquests of her King; and even collects the vanquished with joy around her standard of Eternal Life. The time of her reproofs is the time of her safety and her triumphs. Within her borders is purity, light, hope, joy; and without, terror, dismay, shame, submission. Even they that despised her come bending to her, calling her, the city of the Lord, the Holy One of Israel.

Yield not up, then, the everlasting interests of religion and the church to the follies of man. Assert the honour of your high calling, and boldly carry reproof to the enemies of Zion. Self-defence, the first law of nature, and defence of Christ's cause, the first law of Christianity, unite to call you to this holy purpose, and to arm you with a vigorous resolution,

4. You have on your side the *welfare of sinners themselves.*

The works of sin and darkness to which they addict themselves are unfruitful in any thing but evil. They are ruining themselves and their companions in guilt: for the wages of sin is death. They will not escape, unless they are reclaimed from their sins and errors. They are searing their consciences, blasting their reputation, destroying their comforts, and plunging their souls in eternal flames: and how shall they be recalled to virtue and to happiness, if they are neglected, unrestrained, and unreproved, by the friends of God? Where is their hope, if none possess disinterested love enough to address to them the reproofs that are necessary to their salvation? A sinner unreproved, grows bold in iniquity. A sinner unreproved, spreads wide the contagion of sin. He is daily adding to his guilt, and fitting himself and others for more aggravated wo. You are then guilty of a cruel neglect of his welfare and influence; if, while knowing his faults, and knowing how freely they are published and censured behind his back, and knowing how they are bringing down on his soul the insupportable judgments of Heaven, you do not, at once, bear into his presence the rebukes and counsels of Infinite Love. The Scriptures impliedly charge this cruelty on those who neglect the duty, by the form in which they enjoin it:—"Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour; and shalt not suffer sin upon him."

But when you administer the faithful rebukes of love to sinners around you, you are seeking by necessary means the high object of "saving their souls from death, and hiding a multitude of sins." Their feelings may be wounded, while stung with a view of their deformities and the indignations of virtue; but you are only probing, to heal; you are but administering the necessary medicine to effect a recovery. Their consciences, even at the time, and for ever afterwards, do justice to you, in testifying to your self-denying kindness; and if, subdued and melted by your reproofs, they are recovered to virtue, their hearts will for ever bless you, as the kindest of benefactors. Hundreds now on earth are joyfully walking, arm in arm, the way to the heavenly Zion, who once met each other in the unpleasant relation of reprovers and reproved; and were mingling over reproved guilt their tears of bitterness. And thousands now in glory, are praising God, for those kind benefactors who, overlooking the trials they might meet with from ingratitude and guilt, dared, unsolicited, to address to them the rebukes of Infinite Mercy.

The very welfare of sinners, then, here and in eternity, demands of you fidelity in this duty;—demands that you have no fellowship with them in works of darkness, but that you boldly reprove.

In view then of the methods in which you may convey reproof to sinners, and of the considerations which encourage and embolden you to do it, I would call upon all the friends of God among you *to perform this*

duty. There is always a sufficient call for its performance in this world of evil. You need not go back to the ancient heathen of Ephesus—you need not go abroad to benighted Pagans—you need not search out the dark portions of this Christian country—you need not probably look beyond the limits of your own neighbourhood—to find those who are engaged in the unfruitful works of darkness. It is your lot, as it has been of the church in all ages, to be surrounded by the wickedness of blinded sinners. Travellers with you to eternity—without God and without hope—they imperiously demand of you a faithful discharge of this duty.

"Be strong and do it." Let no leaven of iniquity among yourselves, corrupt with inefficiency the whole mass. Let no root of bitterness spring up to defile many;—to hide the light of example, and stifle the voice, that would administer reproof.

"Be strong and do it." Fear not the sneers of the impious, or the displeasure of the reproved. The God of Israel and the hosts of the wise are with you: the interests of Zion and of sinners are with you, in the performance of this duty.

"Be strong and do it." And Zion shall arise. The glory of the Lord shall compass her as with walls of fire. Her enemies shall be subdued into contrition. Converts shall be multiplied as the drops of the morning. Joy shall be awakened on earth and in heaven over reclaimed and forgiven sinners.

In view of this duty, and the considerations which urge it upon the friends of God, I may surely *warn the workers of iniquity to receive reproofs with humility and gratitude.*

You are reproved by the word of the living God. You are reproved by your own conscience. And, if you are not that hardened scorner, who mocks at all things serious, you may be favoured with the reproofs of man. Remember, that he, who in love reproves you, is a friend—a true friend—a tried friend—whose love has broken through many obstacles to meet you with its warnings; and who brings to you the appeals of truth and soberness—who comes, commissioned of God, and countenanced by all the good and wise, to urge the interests of true piety, and to seek the salvation of your soul. I adjure you by the living Saviour, trifle not with reproof. It is one of the last remedies of divine forbearance. Unless you are humbled by it before God; I am compelled to say, you are fast ripening for ruin. Slighted reproofs accumulate the stores of divine wrath. He that *will not* receive severe remedies, and who *cannot* be restored by mild ones, *must die!* Oh, hear it, ye that sport yourselves in your own deceivings, on the borders of eternity,—hear it;—it is the last kind warning of injured, insulted *Mercy*:—"HE THAT, BEING OFTEN REPROVED, HARDENETH HIS NECK, SHALL SUDDENLY BE DESTROYED, AND THAT WITHOUT REMEDY!"—Sinners, there is awful *meaning* in those words of God!

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RESOURCES OF THE ADVERSARY, AND MEANS OF THEIR DESTRUCTION.

ISAIAH, XLIX. 24, 25.—*Thus saith the Lord, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered.*

ISAIAH, LIII. 12.—*Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death.*

LUKE, XI. 21, 22.—*When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.*

REV. XI. 15.—*And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.*

REV. XIX. 5, 6.—*And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia; for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.*

THE Scriptures teach, that sin commenced its reign on earth under the auspices of a mighty fallen spirit; and that he, having seduced mankind from their allegiance to God, has been constantly employed to maintain his bad eminence over them. They also teach, that the Son of God has interposed to destroy the works of this spirit; and that he will accomplish the object: that the power of Satan shall be broken; and the whole world be restored to loyalty and the favour of Heaven.

The passages which have just been recited, allude to the success with which the enemy of God has fortified his cause—to its final overthrow—and to the exultation and joy with which the event will fill earth and heaven.

I am aware, that with some, the doctrine of fallen angels is but an eastern allegory; and the idea of a conflict, between the creature and Creator, ridiculous, and unworthy of the divine supremacy. I can only say, that if there be not an order of sinful intelligences above men, the Bible is one of the most deceptive books ever written. The entire history of the world

blood, not a principle of this system has been abandoned. All the wiles of ages past are put in requisition now, to heal the fatal wounds which the beast has received; and to render the system still more powerful and terrific. The leaven is in secret and in open operation, in this country; and the quick action of the beast to the touch of the spear, in Palestine, shows that he is neither dead nor asleep. And considering the civilization, and wealth, and science, which the system comprehends, it is from Popery, no doubt, that the gospel is destined to experience the last and most determined resistance.

4. Another form of resistance to the gospel is to be anticipated from the *despotic governments of the earth*—so inconsistent in their influence with that illumination of mind and melioration of heart, which, it is predicted, shall prevail, and which the blessed gospel never fails to produce. Hence it may be expected, that despots will take counsel against the Lord, as the march of intellect, and piety, and civil liberty, shall minister alarm.

To what extent forcible resistance will be made to the gospel, it is not our object now to inquire; or whether republican forms of government will supplant the ancient dynasties. It is enough to know, that all the governments who yield to the intimations of that Providence which sends out religion and civil liberty upon the earth, will be safe and happy; and that all who make resistance, will be agitated by revolutions, and destroyed by heavy judgments. *Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings; and be instructed, ye judges of the earth: Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling: Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little.*

5. Another source of resistance to Christianity is that of *crime in its varied forms.* A vast amount of capital is embarked in enterprises which directly or indirectly war against morality. All this, when the spirit of Christianity shall prevail, will be contraband, and be withdrawn. The power of steam shall not needlessly violate holy time, nor the sail, without cause, whiten in the Sabbath sun, and spread itself to pervert the breath of heaven. Theatres, those "schools of morality," falsely so called, shall cease to beguile unstable souls, whose feet go down to death, whose steps take hold on hell. Christianity, as she prevails, will form a public sentiment that will make virtue blush at the thought of meeting within the same walls, and breathing the same polluted air, and applauding the same exhibitions, with the most debased and wretched portion of the community. All who thrive and grow rich amid the desolations of inebriation, and all who desire to do wickedly without loss of reputation, or annoyance of conscience, will feel instinctively the approach of religion: and as their craft shall be in danger, will raise a loud and bitter cry—'Great is Diana, great is Diana.'

Nor are the maxims of more reputable trade in such nice accordance with the "golden rule," as to need no revision, or to present no resistance to the gospel, as she moves on to make it the universal actual law of commercial intercourse: while the entire world of honour must be expected to stand against that gospel which forbids murder, and inculcates forgiveness, and arrays public sentiment against the guilty.

If the gospel would prohibit only acknowledged immoralities, and wink at *human* weaknesses, the whole pleasure-loving world would consent to an

armistice, and permit her to move on without much complaint. But the inexorable requisitions of purity of heart and self-denial, cannot fail to bring out against her a multitudinous and determined resistance. The haters of her uncharitableness, and the lovers of a more liberal way, and all classes of the openly wicked, will, it may be expected, as the light increases and enmity rises, be condensed into a firmer and firmer phalanx of opposition. And now will the alarm be sounded about popery and priest-craft, by just that class of men, who, in papal countries, love darkness, and most cheerfully purchase indulgences to sin; and who, in this country, should the darkness of popery be permitted to come upon us, would be the first to hail it as a covert for their crimes and a quietus for their consciences. And yet panic-struck will many become about liberty of conscience, who long since have ceased to have any conscience; and suddenly will many fall in love with civil liberty, who, all their days and with all their might, have, by their pernicious influence, been employed in attempts to undermine her deep foundations.

6. To cover the nakedness of this forlorn hope of opposition to the gospel, *a more liberal sort of religion* must be introduced, which shall keep them in countenance, and enable them to wield the name and institutions of Christianity against Christianity—including so much truth as may serve to beguile, but so little as cannot avail to save—sustained by such as live in pleasure, and will not bow the knee to Christ. The time will have come, when the light of science and of Christianity will have rendered obsolete the grossness of idolatry, the imposture of Mahomed, the superstitions of popery, and the impurity of infidelity. A religion must rise, therefore, under the last touchings and finishings of art, where infidels may be received without conversion; and where they may be converted with scarce a perceptible change in doctrine, heart, or life; and where, as in papal countries, the thoughtless, and the gay, and the beautiful, and the dissipated, may float together down the stream, to the sounds of music, and drink the lethean cup, and wake not till their redemption has ceased for ever. All this abomination of desolation is predicted, as attending the last triumphs of pure Christianity. *And he said, Go thy way. Daniel, for the words are closed up, and sealed, till the time of the end. Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried: but the wicked shall do wickedly, and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand.*

7. One other source of opposition to the progress of vital Christianity remains to be mentioned. There may be an attempt to wield the church against herself, by *corrupting the purity of revivals of religion.* Terrible, by the power of revivals, as an army with banners, her victory is secure, unless fanaticism can be substituted for pure religion, and her compact masses be broken and scattered by the commotion of unhallowed passions within. In this manner was the glory of the Reformation eclipsed, and vital religion, in the time of Cromwell, made a scoff and a by-word. The same attempt was made in New-England early in the days of our fathers. It was repeated in the time of Whitefield and the immortal Edwards, with lamentable, though with but partial success. As revivals shall become more extensive, and the Spirit of God shall awaken larger portions of the

community at once, opportunity will be afforded to the enemy—and, apprised of his devices, we ought not to think that the opportunity will be neglected—of mingling false fire with holy zeal, for the purpose of throwing discredit upon a work which threatens a speedy overthrow of his empire.

All these great divisions of systematic opposition to the gospel have, where circumstances allowed, been defended by the sword. Christianity, in her first attempts to disenthral the world, met the storms of ten persecutions, protracted through a period of three hundred years.

The false prophet established, and still maintains, his empire by force. It is death to turn from Mahomed to Jesus Christ. And as to Popery, in her dominions, all the wiles and corruptions of idolatry and imposture have been condensed and wielded with infernal wisdom and malignity against the gospel, ever since the apocalyptic kings gave their power to the beast. And when atheism, for a little moment, abolished popery, its terrific power was, at the same moment, directed with indiscriminate fury against Christianity. The Bible was burnt. The Sabbath blotted out. The existence of God denied: and death proclaimed an eternal sleep.

The Arian heresy, protected by the sword, wielded against the truth a furious persecution. In Holland, Arminius attempted to enlist both literature and the civil arm for the propagation of his sentiments, and, to some extent, succeeded. At Geneva, the enemies of evangelical sentiment, as appears from recent events, do not rely on charity, and enlightened reason, and liberty of conscience; but upon the civil power, to protect them in their usurpations, and to keep back the truth.

And now, can such varied and mighty resistance be overcome? Can the earth be enlightened? Can the nations be disenthraled? Can the whole creation, which has groaned and travailed together in pain until now, be brought out of bondage into glorious liberty? Yes. All this can be done, and *will* be done. Our next inquiry then is,

BY WHAT *Means* SHALL EVENTS SO DESIRABLE BE ACCOMPLISHED?

First—By the judgments of Heaven, in which the Son of Man will come upon the strong man armed, and take away his armour.

Secondly—By the universal propagation of the gospel; before the light of which, idolatry, imposture, and superstition, will retreat abashed. And,

Thirdly—By frequent, and, at last, general revivals of religion; giving resistless power to the gospel, as it is preached to every creature.

Then will come to pass that which is written. Great voices will be heard in heaven, saying, *The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.* As the voice of many waters, and of mighty thunderings, saying, *Alleluia, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.*

It is manifest from prophecy, and clearly to be anticipated from the existing state of the world, that *great commotions and distress of nations* will exist, antecedent to the spiritual, universal reign of Christ on the earth. Some have supposed that these calamities will fall alike upon the church and the world; that as yet the witnesses are to be slain; and that for three years at least, Christianity will seem to be blotted from the earth. Whereas, *manifestly, the* judgments which are to precede the glory of the latter day,

are to fall almost exclusively upon anti-christian nations. And if the witnesses are yet to be slain, they are to be slain in the street of that great city, which, spiritually, is called "Sodom and Egypt"—prophetic symbols, which have been understood to designate countries subject to the dominion of Anti-Christ. The very struggle to suppress vital Christianity in papal countries, called the slaying of the witnesses, may be, and probably will be, the result of moral causes now in powerful operation. Science, and commerce, and the progress of evangelical religion, are fast apprising mankind of their rights, and awakening the desire of civil and religious liberty. And this slaying of the witnesses may be the last struggle of those despotisms, to arrest the march of truth and freedom. It may be the collision between light and darkness—between despotism and liberty—which shall call out the kings of the earth to the battle of the great day of God Almighty; when He, whose eyes are as a flame of fire, on whose head are many crowns, and whose vesture is dipped in blood, shall smite the nations with the sword that goeth out of his mouth, and rule them with a rod of iron, and tread the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God; when the angel standing in the sun, shall summon the fowls of the heavens to the supper of the great God—to eat the flesh of kings, and of captains, and of mighty men.*

But, without attempting a minute exposition of prophecy, nothing is more plainly revealed, than the visitation of the earth with unparalleled judgments and revolutions, preparatory to that state of light and peace which is to bless the world. So long as Satan can wield the power of despotic governments against the truth, he can hold his goods in peace. But these defences, a Stronger than he will take away, when, in awful judgments, He shall come upon him. *He shall overturn, and overturn, until He, whose right it is, shall reign. The day of vengeance is in his heart, because the year of his redeemed is come. The foundations of the earth do shake; the earth is utterly broken down; the earth is clean dissolved; the earth is moved exceedingly; the earth shall reel to and fro; and the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth; and they shall be gathered together as prisoners are gathered in the pit; and shall be shut up in the prison. Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun shall be ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously. And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake and so great.*

One of these moral earthquakes has already shaken Europe to its centre; and the thunderings and heavings of the unquiet earth proclaim, that one wo is past, and behold, another wo cometh quickly.

When these systems of physical resistance are destroyed, then will the time have come to extend the institutions of the Gospel throughout the world. Benevolence, like the air, will move to fill up the vacuum. Like the light

* Rev. xix. 17, 18.

from its great fountain, it will fly to cheer the nations who sit in darkness. And having no resistance to encounter, but the simple power of error, the conflict will be but momentary, and the victory complete. This also is in accordance with prophecy: for immediately after the downfall of Babylon is announced, all heaven breaks forth in ecstasy, saying, *Let us rejoice and give honour to him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.* The church of Christ is called his bride; and the conversion of the nations to Christianity and to God, the day of her espousals.

That this glorious victory is to be consummated by *the special influence of the Holy Spirit* is equally manifest. The simple presence of Christianity would no more convert the heathen, than it converts those where it already exists. Were every family on earth now blessed with a Bible and a pastor, these, without the effusion of the Spirit, would not maintain upon the earth an uncorrupt nominal Christianity, for one hundred years. Revivals of religion are alone adequate to the moral reformation of the world. All other means—science, legislation, philosophy, eloquence, and argument—have been relied on in vain. The disease is of the heart, and they reach it not. But revivals touch the deep springs of human action, and give tone and energy to the moral government of God. They multiply families that call upon the name of the Lord and train up children in his fear, and churches, constrained by the love of Christ, to propagate the gospel. They elevate the standard of liberality, and augment the capital which is consecrated to the renovation of the world, and the importunity of prayer, which secures its application and efficacy. They multiply the host of evangelical ministers and missionaries. They repress crime, and purify the public morality, and breathe into legislation and the intercourse of nations that spirit of the gospel, which shall banish wars, and introduce peace upon earth and good-will towards men. They pour day-light upon darkness, and destroy, with a touch, the power of sophistry. Hence nothing is so terrible to the enemies of evangelical truth as revivals of religion, because nothing is so irresistible. If they oppose them by violence, they move on. If they misrepresent them, they move on. If they ridicule them, they move on. If they imitate them, the imitation fails, and they move on. While, often, the chosen vessels of opposition fall under their power—sending panic and rage through the ranks of the enemy. It is owing to this power of revivals, that they are every where, by the wicked, so much spoken against; and all the infirmities of humanity, which attend them, gathered up with such exultation, and urged as confirmation strong, that they are the work of man, and not the work of God. It is reserved, therefore, for revivals of religion to follow in the train of the means of grace with increasing frequency and power, until a nation shall be born in a day. This also is predicted.—*Who art thou, O mountain, before Zerubbabel? Thou shalt become a plain. Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord. Drop down ye heavens from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness. I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground. It shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh. And then shall that*

wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth and with the brightness of his coming.

The judgments which are to shake down antichristian empires, and cast down high imaginations, and lay open the world to the entrance of truth, and the power of the Spirit, are to be closely associated with a new and unparalleled *vigour of christian enterprise.* Until now, the church will have been the assailed party, and stood upon the defensive: but henceforth the word of command will not be, Stand, but *March.* The gates of the holy city will be thrown open; the tide of war will be rolled upon the enemy; and one shall chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight.

The means and efforts for evangelizing the world must correspond, however, with the magnitude of the result. The idea that God will convert the heathen in his own good time, and that Christians have nothing to do but to pray and devoutly wait, is found in no canonical book. It is the maxim of covetousness, and sloth, and uncaring infidelity. We have no authority for saying, what some, without due consideration, have said, that God, if he pleased, could doubtless in a moment convert the whole heathen world without the gospel. It might as well be said, that he can, if he please, burn without fire, or drown without water, or give breath without atmosphere, as that he can instruct intellectual beings without the means of knowledge, and influence moral beings without law and motive, and thus reclaim an alienated world without the knowledge and moral power of the gospel. It is no derogation from the power of God, that, to produce results, it must be exerted, by means adapted to the constitution of things which Himself has established. God has no set time to favour the husbandman, but when he is diligent in business; and no set time to favour Zion, but when her servants favour her stones and take pleasure in the dust thereof. From the beginning, the cause of God on earth has been maintained and carried forward only by the most heroic exertion. Christianity, even in the age of miracles, was not propagated but by stupendous efforts. And it is only by a revival of primitive zeal and enterprise, that the glorious things spoken of the city of our God can be accomplished.

Nor need we be disheartened. We possess a thousand fold the advantage of apostles and primitive Christians for the spread of the gospel. And shall the whole church on earth—shall the thousand thousands who now profess the pure religion—be dismayed and paralyzed at an enterprise which had once been well nigh accomplished by the energies of twelve men?

But what can be done? It would require ten discourses to answer this question in detail. We can only sketch the outlines of that moral array by which Jesus Christ is preparing to come upon the strong man, and overcome him, and take from him all his armour.

1. There must be *more faith* in the church of God.

All the uncertainties and waverings of unbelief must be swept away by the power of that faith which is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen. Those "scenes surpassing fable," when Satan shall be bound, and an emancipated world shall sing hosanna to the Son of David, must rise up before us in all the freshness and inspiration of

a glorious reality. Such faith, and only such, will achieve again the wonders it wrought in other days. It has lost none of its power. Again, it will subdue kingdoms, work righteousness, obtain promises, stop the mouths of lions, quench the violence of fire, escape the edge of the sword, out of weakness become strong, wax valiant in fight, and put to flight the armies of the aliens. For this is the victory over the world, even your *faith*.

2. There must be *a more intense love for Christ* in his church.

Such love as now burns dimly in the hearts of Christians; a low, and languid, and wavering affection; halting between the opposing attractions of earth and heaven; may answer for standing upon the *defensive*, but never for making that *vigorous onset* which shall subdue the world to Christ. Effort will never surpass desire. And as yet our hearts are not equal to those efforts needed for the achievement of victory. They linger and look back upon the world. They hesitate, and slowly, and with a sigh, part with substance in penurious measure. Weight hangs as yet on the wheels of the Victor's chariot: and never, on earth, as in heaven, will it move,

> "Instinct with spirit,
> Flashing thick flames, ... unless
> Attended by ten thousand thousand saints."

3. There must come an era of *more decided action*, before the earth can be subdued to Christ.

Compared with the exigency, we have not, as yet, the semblance of an army in the field; and our munitions are yet to be collected. Two hundred souls constitute the entire force, which twelve millions of freemen, cheered and blessed with the light of the gospel, have sent forth to bring the world out of bondage. And yet one half the nation is panic-struck at the drafts thus made upon her resources! What has been done, however, is but mere skirmishing before the shock of battle. Half the subjects of Satan's dark empire on earth, have not heard, as yet, that we have a being. And were none but such feeble efforts to be put forth, he, instead of coming down in great wrath, would keep his temper, and leave the war to his subalterns.

Nothing great on earth, good or bad, was ever accomplished without decisive action. The cause, in the moral world, as really as in the natural, must ever be proportioned to the effect to be produced. And what have we done, as yet, to justify the expectation, that God, by such means, is about to *make all things new?* Could our Independence have been achieved by such indecisive action as we put forth for the emancipation of the world? Dear Brethren, we must fix our eye earnestly on a world lying in wickedness: our hearts must be fully set upon its deliverance: our hands must be opened wide for its relief. Not only the ministers of religion must give themselves wholly to this work; but all who prize civil and religious freedom—all who exult in these blessings—must come forth to the help of the Lord against the mighty. And when, to all who are now cheered by the light of revelation, the deliverance of a world in bondage shall become the all-absorbing object, and the concentrating point of holy enterprise, then speedily will the angel descend from heaven, with a great chain, to bind and cast into the bottomless pit him who through so many ages has deceived the nations. But,

4. For this glorious achievement, there is demanded *more courage* than has, in modern days, been manifested by the church of God.

Wherever circumstances have precluded the application of force for the defence of his cause, there the god of this world has attempted to fortify it by a *perverted public sentiment*. This, while it predominates, is as terrific as the inquisition; and if not as bloody, it is unquestionably as virulent, overbearing, and severe. Multitudes shrink before it, who would not hesitate to storm the deadly breach; and one half the power of the Christian church is doubtless this very moment paralyzed by it, if not even arrayed by its influence against the cause of Christ. Fashion is the Juggernaut of Christian lands; around whose car pilgrims of all conditions gather, and do homage.

Here, then, in communities civilized and nominally Christian, is to be fought one of the keenest battles: For after every strong hold is demolished, if Satan can but frame the laws of honour and of fashion, he will not fail to govern by maxims which will shut out the gospel, and perpetuate the dominion of sin. And Christians are the first to be emancipated. While they are in captivity, the world will be in chains. Jesus Christ must have entire possession of his own soldiers, before the armies of the living God can put to flight the armies of the aliens.

This conflict for dominion over public sentiment is coming on: and by this generation, in city and in country, it is to be decided, whether an evangelical or a worldly influence shall prevail—whether the land-marks of Christian morality shall stand against the inundations of vice; or with every thing that is pure, and lovely, and of good report, be swept away. Emboldened by the pusillanimity of the friends of virtue, the enemy have become audacious, and scarcely covet the veil of darkness; but seem even to glory in their shame. And if no stand is made, we are undone. The church in this land will go into captivity, and the nation is undone. Our prosperity and voluptuousness will be our ruin; and short and rapid will be our journey from the cradle to the grave. But if resistance is made, then will the waves rise, and foam, and roar, and dash furiously upon those who shall dare to make a stand: and birds of ill omen will flap their sooty wings, and croak, and scream, to intimidate and dishearten the fearful, and the unbelieving: and all the engines of bad influence will be applied to prevent that coalition of patriotism and of virtue, which would set bounds to the encroachments of evil, and shed day-light upon the works of darkness, and stamp with indelible and intolerable infamy wickedness in high places and in low places.

And now, *custom*, with silver tongue, will plead *prescription*—'It always has been so, and always will be, and why should we attempt innovation?' And *interest*, too, will plead *necessity*—'How can I withdraw my capital, or alter my course? To refuse to do wrong a little, would be to take away my children's bread.' And now, *difficulty*, with good wishes and sorrowing face, will plead, 'Spare thy servant in this thing—is it not a little one?' While *fear* will see the giants, the sons of Anak, and call out for care, and prudence, lest we should act prematurely, or be righteous overmuch. *Petulance*, too, will lift up her voice, with vexation at our presumptuous meddling, wondering that we cannot mind our own affairs, and let other people alone.

And even *charity*, so called, will draw aside her veil, for the archers with poisoned arrows to hit us. While *liberality*, provoked beyond endurance, will hail upon our heads the hard names of 'bigot, enthusiast, fanatic, hypocrite.'

All this, however, we could easily sustain, were there no treachery within. But our hearts are yet in too close consultation with flesh and blood. 'What will the world think? What will the world say? How will it affect my reputation—my interest—my ambition—or even my usefulness?—Suppose I step in as a kind of candid mediator between the world and my too zealous brethren, taking the prudent course, and not carrying matters too far?' O, that prudent course!—that middle ground—so crowded, when the lines are drawing between Christ and the world! Satan desires no better troops than neutral Christians. And the Lord Jesus Christ abhors none more. He prefers infidelity to lukewarm Christianity. *I would that thou wert either cold or hot; so then because thou art neither, I will spew thee out of my mouth.*

As to cheating Satan out of his empire over men, by a reserved course of warfare, he has no objection that Christians should dream about it, and try it. But we mistake, if we suppose our wisdom a match for his wiles; or that we can so prudently drive him out of this world, as that he will find no pretext for controversy. Whenever we do enough to give to religion a solemn reality upon the minds of men, and draw the cords of evangelical morality with such power, as shall compel reformation, or inflict disgrace; we must calculate to meet his resistance who reigns in the hearts of the children of disobedience. And the time will come, when men must take sides. For as the conflict between virtue and vice waxes warm, neither side will tolerate neutrality: and he who plants his foot upon neutral ground, will select just the hottest place in the battle, and receive the fire from both sides.

Two things are required of all who would be found on the side of liberty and evangelical morality. One is, that we will not do wrong in obedience to custom: The other is, that we will not be accessary to the wrong done by others—that we will give to the cause of virtue the testimony of correct opinions—the power of a correct example—and the influence of our inflexible patronage. There are piety and principle enough in the community to put down the usurpations of irreligion and crime, if the sound part of the community will only awake, and array itself on the side of purity, and order. But we must come out, and be separate, and touch not the unclean thing. The entire capital in the hands of honest and moral men, which is employed in establishments that corrupt society, must be withdrawn; and that patronage which has swelled the revenue of establishments that lend their aid to the cause of licentiousness, must be turned over to the side of purity and order. Until this is done, we shall not cease to be partakers in other men's sins. The press, that mighty engine of good or evil, in a free country, must be enlisted decisively on the side of virtue; and its perverted influence, if it continue, must be sustained only by those whose guilty cause it espouses. We cannot, as Christians—we cannot, as patriots—give our patronage to that press which will not plead the cause of virtue, and which will prostitute its fearful energies to the cause of sin.

5. There must be new and more vigorous efforts to increase the number *nd power of* evangelical churches in our land.

In all countries the tone of piety and evangelical morality corresponds exactly with the number, and purity, and energy of the churches of our Lord Jesus Christ. The want of this organized moral power in many parts of our land is appalling. Our population multiplies, and the ratio of good moral influence declines, and ignorance and crime are coming in like a flood. All that has been done by Tract Societies, by Sabbath Schools, by Education Societies, and by the National Society for Domestic Missions, is as the drop of the bucket to the ocean. A new and mighty effort is demanded, to send light through the territories of darkness—to repress crime, and perpetuate our civil and religious institutions. In our large cities, especially, is the increase of ignorance and licentiousness lamentable and ominous. Here wealth and temptation concentrate their power upon masses of mind, whose influence cannot fail to affect deeply the destiny of the nation. If they send out a vigorous current of healthful life-blood, the whole nation will feel the renovating influence: but if, with every pulsation, they send out iniquity and death, no power on earth can avert our doom.

A *moral* power is the only influence that can save our cities. Mere coercion, in a land of freemen, will not avail. Nor will a lax nominal Christianity suffice; where offenders may find access to the table of Christ, and protection by the horns of the altar. The new churches, to succeed, should be composed of persons of real piety, of kindred sentiment, and of decided character; and, from the beginning, consist of so many members, and be blessed with such talent and devoted piety in the ministry, and be so countenanced and sustained by other churches, as that their attraction shall not fail to bring under the sacred influence of the gospel the surrounding community. Until our cities shall thus be made to feel, in every part, the purifying power of the gospel, the whole land will continue to send to them, as it has done, hecatombs of youthful victims, to be repaid by disappointed hopes and moral contamination.

6. Special effort is required, to secure to the rising generation an education free from the influence of bad example, and more decidedly evangelical.

The atmosphere which our children breathe, from the cradle upward, should be pure. Instead of this, it would not be difficult to find common schools in which ignorance and irreligion predominate. Even where the intellect is cultivated, the heart not unfrequently is corrupted, and the child made wise only to do evil. In a great proportion of the higher schools, to which Christians send their children, little exists of a decidedly religious tendency; while in some a powerful influence is exerted against evangelical sentiments and piety.

And though in many of our Colleges there is a salutary religious influence, and repeated revivals of religion are enjoyed, in none is the influence of religion so decisive as it might be; while in some, to which pious parents send their children, the influence is directly and powerfully hostile to religion.

I am aware, that not a few regard religious influence in our Colleges as already too great, and that an effort is making to separate religion from science, during the progress of a collegiate education. And those who choose to rear Colleges, and send their offspring where the power of the gospel shall be excluded, have, doubtless, a right to do so—answerable for

their conduct only to God. But no Christian can do this without violating the vows of God which are upon him, to train up his child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. And, instead of a compromise in the evangelical Colleges of our land, there should be, as easily there may be, a more decided tone of religious influence. Our Colleges should every one of them be blessed, not only with preaching, but with kind, discreet, and assiduous pastoral instruction and care. Why should these precious communities of inexperienced youth, separated from parental inspection, and exposed to peculiar temptation, be deprived of the watchful eye and parental voice of pastoral exhortation and advice? What parent would not pray with more faith, and sleep more quietly, if he knew that some one, acquainted with the youthful heart, and appointed to watch over his child, had gained his confidence and affection, and was praying and labouring for his salvation?

There is no period in life when the heart may be more successfully assailed, than that which is passed in a College. And there is no class of human beings, among whom revivals may be promoted, by proper pastoral attention, with greater certainty, or with greater power and glory. Nor can it be expected, that the Church will ever look forth fair as the morning, until effectual care is taken, that in her higher schools and Colleges, her children shall be induced to consecrate to God the dew of their youth.

7. The vigour of *charitable effort* must be greatly increased.

As long as rich men shall trust more in uncertain riches than in the living God, and the covetous shall dare to heap up treasures to themselves, consecrating to God scarcely the crumbs that fall from their table, and the ambitious shall insist that they will roll in splendour, and give only the pittance which can be spared from the expense of a wanton ostentation—as long as professors shall consume, in extra gratifications of sense, to the injury of health, sums that, if consecrated to Christ, might suffice to extend the word of life and the institutions of the gospel all over the world—as long as avaricious Christians shall so extend their plans of business, with the increase of their capital, as always to be straitened in the midst of their gains—and as long as parents shall labour to amass wealth for their offspring, only to paralyze their enterprise, and corrupt their morals, and ensure their ruin, —so long the cause of God on earth must move slowly. But the blame must rest on us. There is at this moment, in the hands of Christians, capital enough to evangelize the world in a short period of time, and without the retrenchment of a single comfort, and only by the consecration to Christ of substance, the possession of which would be useless, and often injurious. It is not required of Christian nations to sustain the entire work of preaching the gospel to all the unevangelized population of the earth. Nothing is needed but to erect the standard in pagan lands—to plant the seed—to deposit the leaven, in schools and in churches, until each nation shall support gospel institutions. This is the work to which God in his providence is calling the churches. Now, and for fifty years to come, the substance and enterprise of good men is imperiously demanded. Within that period, it is not improbable, that every nation may be so far evangelized, as that the work may move onward to its consummation, without extraneous aid.

8. The jealousies of Christians who are united substantially in their views of evangelical doctrine and religion, and who are divided only by localities, and rites, and forms, must yield, and give place to the glorious exigencies of the present day. The amalgamation of denominations is not required. The division of labour may greatly augment the amount; and the provocation to love and good works may be real and salutary, and still be conducted without invidious collision. Like the tribes of Israel, we may all encamp about the tabernacle of God—each under his own standard—and when the ark advances, may all move onward, terrible only to the powers of darkness. And if the enemies of righteousness are not sufficient to rebuke our selfishness, and force us into a coalition of love and good works; then verily it may be expected—and even be hoped—that God, by the fire of persecution, will purge away our dross, and take away our tin, until we shall love him, and his cause, and one another, with a pure heart, fervently.

9. Let me add, that we must guard against the dangers peculiar to a state of religious prosperity.

There is no condition in which an individual, or the church at large, can be exempted from temptations. And especially as the church shall become formidable, and bring upon the great enemy of God the pressure of a desperate extremity, we are to expect, that his rage will increase, and his wiles be multiplied. For he will leave the world only when forced; and will fight upon the retreat—giving many a desperate battle, when it shall seem as if the necessity was past of watching against his devices. Never, therefore, has the necessity of vigilance and prayer been more imperious than now. Let all the churches, then, with their pastors, feel deeply their dependence on God; and when their alms come up before him, and his Spirit shall descend in new and glorious showers, let them watch and pray that they enter not into temptation, and experience an overthrow in the moment of victory.

To fear revivals, because attended by some indications of human imperfection, would be weak and wicked: and far from the church of God be the presumptuous confidence, that nothing deeply injurious to the general interests of religion can be blended with a real work of the Spirit. But though I am not without solicitude on this head, I do trust and expect, that God will preserve his churches, and cause pure religion and undefiled to prosper, and not permit the adversary to turn our glory into shame. O, could he do it, how would his minions scream out their joy! and how would Zion be confounded, and in this day of rejoicing, be compelled to hang her harp upon the willow, and sit down to weep in sackcloth and ashes! To conclude,

Will any of you, my hearers, in this glorious day, take side against the cause of Christ! It will be a fearful experiment. What the mind and counsel of God have purposed to do for the melioration of man is now hastening to its consummation, with the intenseness of infinite benevolence, under the guidance of unerring wisdom, and by the impulse of Almighty power. And wo unto him who contendeth with his Maker.—The lines are now drawing, and preparation is fast making for the battle of the great day of God Almighty. And who is on the Lord's side? Who! Will any of you, in this sublimely interesting moment, stand on neutral ground!

Remember, that neutrality is treason: and if persisted in, is as fatal as the unpardonable sin. Jesus Christ will have the decided services of his people. Already has he denounced as enemies, all who will not labour and suffer for him.—*He that is not for me, is against me: and whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven. Think not that I came to send peace on earth;* (that is, that the progress of truth will be without resistance and persecution;) *I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come,* (that is, the effect of my coming will be, as the gospel prevails,) *to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother; and a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me: and he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life, shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake, shall find it.* These statutes are not repealed. And if the laws of Christian discipleship could bind men to give up every relative, and even life itself, for Christ and his gospel, no excuse, surely, will screen from condemnation those who flinch and temporize, where the sacrifices required are comparatively trivial. If such as would not lay down their life for Christ, can not be accepted—what will become of those, in Christian lands, who will not lay down their substance, nor risk their reputation, nor lift a finger to advance his cause?

Is there a Christian here, who cannot, for the year to come, double the amount of his charities? Is there one who will not now purpose in his heart to do it? Brethren, the time is short in which we here have opportunity to express our boundless obligations to the Saviour. The fashion of the world passeth away. Next year, our tongue may be employed in celestial praises; and our substance be in other hands. What remains then, but that this day we dedicate ourselves, and our all, anew, to Him, who washed us in his blood? The tone of feeling which we cherish to-day, may, by a holy sympathy, and by the power of the Holy Ghost, be propagated through this great city—through this powerful nation—and through the world. The augmented religious enterprise, to which we pledge ourselves this day, may tell quickly in the very heart of Satan's empire; and cause light to spring up in retreats of deepest darkness.

If any man, however, is smitten with fear, let him retreat. If any man is faint-hearted, let him draw back. If any man tremble at his proportion of the charges for evangelizing the whole world, let him depart. If any man is alarmed at the noise which precedes the last conflict, let him hide himself, with his talent, in the earth! But let all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, and wait for his appearing and glory—give themselves anew to his service; and break the earthen vessel; and lift up their light; and shout, *The sword of the Lord and of Gideon:* and the victory, and more than the victory, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High God. And a great voice out of heaven shall be heard, saying, *Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.*

THE

NATIONAL PREACHER.

Go....Teach all Nations....*Matt.* xxviii. 19.

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SERMON XXV.

BY WILLIAM PATTON, A.M.

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THE DUTY AND IMPORTANCE OF SPECIAL EFFORTS FOR THE CONVERSION OF CITIES.

LUKE, xxiv. 47.—*And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations*, BEGINNING AT JERUSALEM.

HERE the apostles receive from Christ a commission to commence in one of the chief cities of the world the great business of preaching the gospel to mankind. The fulfilment of prophecy required them to begin at Jerusalem. "Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." "And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem." But there were other and more special reasons. It was at Jerusalem that the death and resurrection of the Son of God took place:—facts, on which Christianity rested all its claims: and it was fit that the enemies of truth should have every possible advantage for controverting those facts. In commencing at Jerusalem, an immediate and striking illustration was also afforded of the forgiving spirit of Christianity—'Go at once, and preach unto these mine enemies repentance and remission of sins. Let them have the opportunity of salvation through my blood—even that blood which their own wicked hands have shed.'

This direction to the first preachers of the cross, to begin at Jerusalem, suggests the general thought,

THAT IT BECOMES CHRISTIANS, IN ALL AGES, TO MAKE SPECIAL EFFORTS FOR THE CONVERSION OF CITIES AND LARGE TOWNS.

This thought may be illustrated and enforced, from the example and instructions of Christ and his apostles; from the early and signal visitations of the Spirit on cities; from the power with which Satan reigns in them; and from their relative importance, and influence on the world

I. *Our Saviour devoted his personal ministry very much to cities and large towns*

Says Matthew, "And it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities." Mark speaks of Him as follows: "And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he departed into a solitary place, and there prayed: and Simon, and they that were with him, followed after him. And when they had found him, they said unto him, All men seek for thee. And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth." Luke informs us, that, on another occasion, He said unto those who sought him, and who urged him that he should not depart from them, "I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also, for therefore am I sent."

From many other passages of Scripture, also, we learn of Christ's preaching in cities. "And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus." "And all the city was moved, saying, Who is this?" "And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him." He is also found in Jericho, and in Capernaum. His wonders are made known at Chorazin and Bethsaida. His walks are along the shores, where commerce and trade had congregated vast multitudes. Jerusalem he repeatedly visits—especially on the anniversaries of religious festivals; when his instructions might fall upon the ear of assembled thousands; and through them be conveyed to every town and village of the land. On one occasion, when he was come near to the city, "he beheld and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace; but now are they hid from thine eyes.—Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" On another occasion, it is said, "Then began he to upbraid the cities, wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not. Wo unto thee, Chorazin; wo unto thee, Bethsaida; for if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. And thou Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell; for if the mighty works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom, in the day of judgment, than for thee." Thus it appears that the All-wise

Saviour thought it proper to devote much of his ministry to cities and large towns.

II. *Christ, in his instructions to his disciples, particularly directs their attention to cities and large towns.*

"These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, inquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily, I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah, in the day of judgment, than for that city." How solemn, yet well defined were these instructions. How strongly must the twelve have been impressed with the importance of special exertion in large towns and cities. "After these things, the Lord appointed seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face, into every city and place, whither he himself would come. And he said unto them, Into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you, and heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say, even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom and Gomorrah, than for that city." Wherefore should so much stress be laid upon cities, unless it was peculiarly important that they should be converted? And wherefore so heavy a curse, unless the power of their example was great?

But still more particular and urgent are his instructions—The disciples, when sent forth, were admonished that they would be "as sheep in the midst of wolves;"—that they would be exposed to many and severe trials. And surely, under such circumstances, human nature would plead, that, when persecuted in the city, they might turn to the less prejudiced inhabitants of the country. But no: the command is, "When they persecute you in one city, flee ye into another; for, verily, I say unto you, ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of Man be come."

It is true, that in the last great commission, in which the world was spread before them as the field, every limitation was taken off, save that they should begin at Jerusalem. Still the example of the apostles is worthy of notice. For whilst several of them continued for years in Jerusalem,—notwithstanding the persecutions which they experi-

enced—others went forth, and immediately preached the gospel of their ascended Saviour in other great cities of the world.

Paul and Barnabas are found at Antioch, the capital of Pisidia. From Antioch they went to Iconium, the metropolis of Lyconia. Thence to Derbe, another city of Lyconia. In that embassy, they also preached at Lystra, and Perga, and many other cities. Soon after this, Paul said unto Barnabas, "Let us go again, and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do." Paul expressed an ardent desire to be at Jerusalem on the feast-days:—"For he hasted, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem, the day of Pentecost;" for then thousands of strangers would be there assembled—"Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers of Mesopotamia," and of many other places. In Rome, too, that imperial city, did this apostle continue for two years, preaching the gospel of Christ. There he established a Christian church, to which he addressed the noblest epistle ever written. Of Philip it is recorded, that "passing through, he preached in all the cities, till he came to Cesarea." The apostles and disciples, then, directed their attention very particularly to cities.

III. *Cities were the theatres of the Holy Spirit's first and most illustrious achievements.*

Open the book of the Acts, and mark how and where the Spirit of God accompanied the labours of the apostles. It was at Jerusalem, the city whose million voices had just before demanded the death of their Lord, and imprecated his blood upon their own heads, that the first and greatest effusion of the Holy Spirit took place. *There* was spiritual wickedness in high places. There iniquity was strongly intrenched. The strong arm of the civil as well as ecclesiastical power was its defence; and human calculation could look for no visits of mercy. Still the Saviour's command, to begin at Jerusalem, was obeyed. Nor was it long, before that city was filled with the presence of the Most High—before the Spirit came down in power, and thousands were converted to Christ.

But this is not a solitary case. At Antioch, also, the Spirit was poured out. Indeed, there are two places of this name mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles;—both visited in saving mercy. One, the capital of Syria, a city of great note. It was about ten miles in circumference; and, in population, wealth, and splendour, esteemed the third city of the age. Here Paul and Barnabas preached. Here the disciples were first called Christians. Here the Church continued long

to flourish. Here the eloquent Chrysostom, at the close of the fourth century, preached with great power and success: and here the Holy Spirit descended. "Now they, which were scattered abroad, upon the persecution that arose about Stephen, travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but the Jews only. And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed and turned unto the Lord. Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the Church which was in Jerusalem; and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch. Who, when he came and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord." So great was this work, so important this field of usefulness, that to secure the best assistance, "Barnabas departed to Tarsus to seek Saul; and when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people." So powerful was this work of God, as to demand, for a whole year, the special labours of two of his most favoured servants.

The other Antioch, mentioned in the Acts, was the capital of Pisidia; a place where many things opposed the advance of holiness. But there also Paul and Barnabas laboured; and there souls were born into the kingdom. The record is, "They came to Antioch, in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day." And Paul preached of Jesus and the resurrection, and faithfully warned against lightly esteeming the work of God. "Beware, therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken in the prophets: Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish; for I work a work in your days, which ye shall in nowise believe, though a man declare it unto you. And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached unto them the next Sabbath. And the next Sabbath day came almost the whole city together, to hear the word of God. And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord; and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region, and the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost."

Ephesus, too, was visited by the Holy Spirit. This was one of the most famous cities of Asia Minor. By historians, it has been called the ornament of Asia—the greatest and most frequented emporium of the continent. Here stood one of the seven wonders of the world—

the idolatrous temple of Diana. Paul paid two visits to this city: the first, a very short one. After some months, he returned, and continued for three years, and had great success. Many things opposed the influence of truth. Iniquity was deeply rooted: their established religion was a source of revenue; and countenanced them in unhallowed courses. But the Spirit of grace prevailed. The result was, "that many that believed, came, and confessed, and showed their deeds. Many of them, also, which used curious arts, brought their books together, and burned them before all men. And they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver;" or, according to our currency, nearly twenty-eight thousand dollars. Thus multitudes made a public renunciation of idolatry, and a public profession of their faith in Christ. "So mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed."

The last city that we shall mention, as blessed with a revival, is Corinth, the capital of Achaia. Here stood the temple of Venus; for the support of whose costly and debasing services, a thousand human victims were continually kept!—The multitude in this city were given to a species of crime, most deadening to the conscience, and damning to the soul. Yet all this did not discourage the intrepid apostle. For, about the year of our Lord fifty-two, he came to Corinth, and "reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath day, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks." The persecuting spirit of the Jews was marshalled against him. Yet he was successful, for *God was with him*. "Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized. Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace, for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee; for I have much people in this city." And so great was the work, and so important the station, that "he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them." Here a large church was gathered, to which he addressed two epistles.

We could mention other ancient cities as blessed with revivals. We could tell you of Athens, the eye and glory of Greece; of Philippi, the chief city of Macedonia; of Iconium, "where a great multitude, both of the Jews and also of the Greeks, believed;" of Rome too, and many others; but we forbear, since enough is already before you to illustrate the position, that cities were the theatres of the Holy Spirit's first and most illustrious achievements. Indeed, what is the book of the Acts, but one continued history of revivals in cities and populous places?

IV. *We should seek the conversion of Cities, because in them the Adversary reigns with peculiar power.*

Experienced Generals bend their most powerful forces against those positions most strongly intrenched; well knowing, that if these are subdued, the courage of the enemy is daunted, his plans marred, and that what remains may fall an easy conquest. Why then should Christians leave to Satan the quiet dominion of cities? He would rather give up a thousand inland posts, than these strong holds of his empire. But, Oh, could he be dislodged from these, how paralyzed would be his arm—how feeble his resistance—how lost his influence! Would you see the power of Satan in cities? Cast your eye back upon the past. What were Sodom and Gomorrah? What were Tyre, and Sidon, and Ninevah? What was Babylon? What was Jerusalem in its latter days, when given up accursed of God? What were they, but sinks of pollution and fountains of ruin? And could we draw aside the curtains of darkness, what might we see in modern cities! Oh, the pollution, and dark waters, that are open to the eye of God! Oh, the thousand lures to vice! Oh, the frauds, the oppressions, the numberless wrongs, which break down the integrity of the young; which harden the middle-aged, and cover gray hairs with shame, and wretchedness, and ruin! Oh, the dissipations, over which custom has thrown an influence well nigh omnipotent! Oh, the tauntings, and the high looks, the stiff neck, and the contemptuous sneer, with which wealth and station conduct themselves towards the lowliness of Christian meekness! Oh, the power that nerves itself against holiness! Wealth and imposing splendour, eloquence and numbers, are in its ranks. Perjury and cruel mockings are among its weapons. Oh, the chains of darkness and gates of death, with which the strong man armed here holds his prisoners! How loudly then do these demand the commiseration and special effort of those, who would proclaim liberty to the captives, and life to the dead! And, for the encouragement of the faithful, we add,

V. *There are peculiar advantages for the promotion of Religion in cities.*

God is wont to accompany the efforts of his people with special grace, whenever they are exposed to extraordinary hazards. So, where peculiar difficulties obstruct the advance of truth, there will also be found other circumstances, which, if properly seized, will greatly facilitate the work of reformation.

In cities, ministers and good men can readily and effectually co-operate in plans of usefulness. The inhabitants of smaller towns and villages are too scattered to allow of ready co-operation; but in our cities, a few minutes may assemble many of those who love the Lord. The dangers which threaten, or the hopes which gladden, quickly circulate. The weakness of one portion may be readily sustained by the greater strength of some other portion. In the multitude of professing Christians, may be found men of wisdom, of wealth, of enterprise, of leisure, of devotedness; all of whose varied gifts and talents may be concentrated for good. Surely these are advantages peculiar to cities. Too long have we looked upon the might of opposing interests, and neglected the power which God hath given us. Too long have churches stood alone, and feebly exerted their separate influences. But in a union of the efforts of churches the increase of power may be immense; for whilst "one shall chase a thousand, two shall put ten thousand to flight."

It is by the means which cities afford for ready co-operation, that Satan and his followers have in all ages achieved so much. *They* make common cause. They suffer no differences to divide their strength; knowing "that an house divided against itself cannot stand." They combine their forces, in any plan which promises injury to the Christian interest. Cities furnish to Christians the very same opportunities for united effort, and thus present peculiar advantages.

Again, cities also furnish peculiar advantages for individual exertion. Here a minister's influence may at once reach, not merely to his own congregation, but far beyond. Every month he is brought in contact with some thousands, who may be affected by his faithfulness. And under his influence, many benevolent and pious institutions may rise and shine to bless the world.

But it is not to ministers alone, that cities present large fields for exertion. Private Christians also have abundant opportunities for usefulness. In the walks of business, the influence of one inflexibly just man is felt as far as his name is known. If Christians, in our cities, would conduct themselves agreeably to the Bible, how awful to the wicked would be their example! What reformations would be wrought among the worldly and profane! How many haunts of poverty and wretchedness would be searched out! How many souls, once in communion with the saints, would be brought back from their wanderings! How many children, rescued from vice, would be brought to the Sabbath school; and there, perhaps, be taught of God to become themselves angels of mercy! How many meetings for prayer and exhortation would every week be sustained among the poor and the

wretched! How many of these degraded immortals might be rescued from temporal and eternal darkness, to become lights in the world, and stars in the kingdom of our Father's glory! What field then offers so rich and large an harvest to faithful labour? The same exertion, that would instruct hundreds in the country, may reach thousands in the city. Public sentiment has too long checked the movements of sympathy for these congregated thousands. A voice, almost unbroken, has sounded out; 'Peculiar and insuperable difficulties prevent a general revival in cities: such are the occupations, such the habits, such the temptations, and such the superabounding iniquity, that it were visionary to hope for any general and powerful work of mercy.' Well, then, had we not better give all up; and let human nature here sink into its natural channels; and let multitudes before our eyes continue to crowd the gates of the second death! O God, forbid such cowardice, cruelty, and treachery in thy servants! No; we will not thus surrender immortals. While there is grace or even nature in our hearts, we will not. We have, indeed, heard of difficulties, till the heart is pained, and the soul is wearied. But where are these insuperable difficulties to be found? Not in the Scriptures of God, surely; not in the result of apostolic labours; but in the unbelief and inaction of modern Christians. "God is no more hostile to cities than to villages: his Spirit is as free, and his offers of salvation as full, to the people of the crowded city, as of the open country." Let the advantages then be embraced. Let the power be concentrated. Let the sacramental host arise; and the work is done. And instead of being overwhelmed with shame and deserved reproach, we may joyfully say to such as pass by; "Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof; mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following. For this God is our God for ever and ever." "Then the sons also of them that afflicted Zion shall come bending unto her; and all they that despised her shall bow themselves down at the soles of her feet; and they shall call her the City of the Lord—the Zion of the Holy One of Israel."

VI. *A sixth reason for special efforts in behalf of Cities is, the influence which they exert on the country and on the world.*

Look to any nation, whether ancient or modern; throw the map before you; fix your eye upon the spots that bear rule; that command the attention of the enterprising, and busy the thoughts of statesmen. You have fixed it upon the cities of the world. Where was the strength of Italy, if not in Rome, once mistress of the world? Where

the strength of Greece, if not in Athens, the mother of arts and refinement? And where is the strength of our Republic, if not in our cities and large towns? There talent in every art and profession is fostered, and exerts peculiar influence. There wealth concentrates its millions upon millions, to exert extensively a blasting or brightening influence on society. There the press daily sends out its thousands and its tens of thousands of winged messengers, to excite the passions, to influence the opinions, to control the energies of a nation. Powerful as is this engine, for corrupting or sanctifying the people, who does not know that its munitions and magazines of strength are placed principally in cities; and that the character which the press there sustains is diffused throughout the land? In cities, commerce is concentrated. The products of the soil flow from every county, town, and village, to the cities; and thence they are distributed to the world The riches, the luxuries, the products of other climes and nations are brought to cities, and thence distributed through the land. How manifest then, that cities must exert a mighty influence on the country and on the world. Who, that reflects on their extended intercourse, does not know, that they regulate the prices of commodities; that their fashions are imitated; that their maxims of trade are common law; and that their moral habits and opinions, good or bad, have an influence on the whole community? Their influence is great, whether we consider them in a moral or political point of view. The capture of a city has decided the destiny of a nation. When Babylon was taken, a mighty empire was given to the invader. When Jerusalem was vanquished, all Judea was subdued. When ill-fated France was tossed with revolutions and counter-revolutions, the possession of her metropolis gave to either party the supreme command.

Now suppose that all this influence of cities is of a worldly, immoral, irreligious character; what must be its blasting power on the general interests of religion! It was when the pretended successor of Peter established his authority in Rome, that that mystical Babylon became "the mother of harlots," and "made the nations drunk with the wine of the wrath of her fornications." And not until the angel shall "cry, with a mighty and strong voice, *Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen,*" will the strong man armed be vanquished, and the earth be encompassed with glory. Not until the evil influence of cities shall be arrested, will the mighty obstacles to the world's redemption be removed. How immeasurably important then, that great efforts be made for their conversion; and how merciful in God to destroy such of them as will not repent. Oh, it was mercy infinite, that rained down fire upon

Sodom, and poured it heavily upon Gomorrah; and thus saved millions from the contagion of their wickedness!

But suppose that all the influence of cities were of an heavenly character—suppose the intelligence could be circulated along all our navigable rivers and canals—suppose it could be communicated from village to village, and from family to family, throughout the country, that the Spirit of God, as on the day of Pentecost, had come down in awful majesty and power among us; that all our men of business, and youth of folly, had been arrested in their worldly career; that all our theatres and resorts for vain pleasure had been forsaken; that our temples were crowded and overflowing with devout worshippers, and anxious inquirers; that the universal voice of our city's population had become, What shall we do, that we may glorify God and extend his kingdom? Suppose, I say, that this mighty change in our city could be told throughout the country; who can estimate the overwhelming influence it would carry along with it? Where is the solitary village that would not feel the impulse, and have its eye and heart lifted to Heaven, in view of the bright cloud of incense, ascending from these hundred temples, and these thrice ten thousand family altars? And to extend our view still further; suppose that every city of our land—that every city of the world—should experience such a change; what almighty strength and zeal would it give to the Angel having the everlasting Gospel to publish! How soon would the universal acclamation of mankind be, "Glory, and honour, and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne!" And how soon would that blessed voice be heard from the heaven of heavens, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of the Lord, and his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever!"

These are not mere pictures of the imagination. The realities are at hand. And the influence of cities, in introducing them, must be felt. For "they of the city shall flourish like the grass of the earth." "The name of the city from that day shall be, *The Lord is there.*" "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, it shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities; and the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts." Thus the day shall yet be, when the presence and power of the Holy God in cities shall so absorb the affections, and command the energies of their inhabitants, that, throughout the land, they shall be known and celebrated, not for their wealth, their splendour, their numbers, or their worldly enterprise, but *as the places where God has fixed his tabernacle.* Yes, the day shall yet come when the intercourse between cities shall

be chiefly for purposes of religious improvement—when combinations for political intrigue, or mercantile speculation, which now waken such intensity of interest in our cities, shall dwindle to their comparative nothingness; and when the world's redemption shall assume its proper magnitude; and all be stimulated to more holy devotedness, and more heavenly effort. Oh, what a day, when all our increasing facilities of intercourse with the land, and with foreign nations, shall be used mainly for advancing that kingdom which consists in righteousness and peace! —when thousands shall prayerfully wait the arrival of every post, and hail the coming in of every vessel, for intelligence, not of this world's riches and glories, but of the glories and victories of Zion.

Such, however, is the present power of the adversary in cities, that no ordinary effort will dispossess him. Still it must be done. The triumphs of the cross, the salvation of the world can never be perfected without it. I know there are difficulties;—that cities do congregate vast assemblies of active depravity;—that they present multiplied enchantments to ruin;—that in every city wickedness displays a stern and lofty front. But I also know, that before the coming Spirit of God these obstacles shall melt away like wax, and vanish like smoke; "for strong is his hand and high is his right hand."

It was when revivals prevailed in cities, that the gospel spread with such amazing rapidity: and so, when the Spirit shall again descend upon them, will the work of reformation move forward with such power and grandeur, as shall make manifest that God is in Zion; "that the chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels;" and that "the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place." Let all, then, who love Zion, seek for the reviving influences of the Spirit upon cities. While every hand is faithful in the discharge of duty, let every heart be impressed with the sentiment, *Not by might, nor by power, but by my* SPIRIT, *saith the Lord of hosts;* and let every eye be directed to Him who hath promised, that *when iniquity cometh in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard.*

In urging the importance of special effort and prayer for the renovation of cities, we do not overlook the interests of the country; but would thus guard every town and village from an influence heavily impregnated with moral poison and death. The merchants of the interior, in the prosecution of their business, regularly visit the metropolis. Many of them, on the enticement of friends and acquaintance, attend the theatres, and other places of vain amusement and sin; they become familiar with their glare and dissipation. They return, and tell what their eyes have seen, and what their ears have heard, and thus create in the bosom of the young, the ardent, the rich, and the worldly,

a thirst for similar pastimes, and a disrelish for sober realities. Many faithful pastors in the land weep over the growing immoralities occasioned by the influence of cities. Many churches lament the defection of their members, having become worldly in their spirit, and vain in their imaginations, by reason of their frequent intercourse with cities. If such, then, is their influence upon the country, well may the churches, planted throughout the land, feel deeply interested in the moral character of cities, and pray for their conversion to God.

Let our cities become places of holiness: let holiness to the Lord be written upon the heart of every merchant, of every mechanic, of every statesman, of every counsellor, of every officer, upon every hall of legislation, and every splendid edifice; and an influence sweet, holy, and happy, shall go forth to revive the hearts of God's people, to awe and confound opposers, and to dress up the wilderness "like the garden of God."

O, what a scene of grandeur and glory, when the thousands of the saints shall wrestle in the spirit of Jacob for the blessing: when they shall rise up in the spirit of their Master, and display an untiring zeal for the salvation of man! O, what a scene, when the immense crowds of immortal beings, who throng our streets, shall be deeply impressed with the conviction of their accountability!—When every man shall feel that he is acting continually under the eye of God, and in full prospect of the judgment. Let these scenes be realized, and already I see "the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." And I hear "a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God."

Friends of the Redeemer, the hastening of this blessed consummation depends very much upon your will. God has intrusted great power in your hands. In the revelation of his Son, he has given you that word, which is "as a fire, and like a hammer, that breaketh the rock in pieces." In shedding down a spirit of union, and guiding to the formation of great benevolent associations, he has given you facilities for extended influence hitherto unparalleled. He has given you wealth, and knowledge, and all the means for using these facilities. And in the article of prayer, he has endued you with a power well nigh omnipotent. His condescending language is, "Concerning the work of my hands COMMAND YE ME." I see among you men of wealth, who can count your tens, your fifties, and your hundreds of thousands,—all of which has been solemnly consecrated to God. I see among you men of talent,—"capable of intimidating the col-

lective vices of a nation or an age." I see among you men of enterprise, and courage, and resistless perseverance. I see among you men, who have strong confidence in God. And shall these varied powers of resistance and aggression be circumscribed by the walls of individual churches? Shall they not rather be combined for raising a higher and higher tone of moral feeling, and Christian enterprise? Shall they not send a strong, concentrated light into every dark retreat of wickedness? Shall not the tide of dissipation, and crime, that would overflow and mar every thing sacred, be met and turned back? Shall not thousands and tens of thousands on our borders, and in our midst, be rescued from the iron sway of the destroyer, and be saved from going down to the pit? Shall not new temples be opened for their reception? and shall not "God, even our God, be a wall of fire round about them, and a glory in the midst of them?"

Do you ask more particularly, how this shall be done? Plant, for instance, an able and devoted minister in the most degraded portion of our city. Let him employ his time in the cultivation of one thousand of these minds. Let him, by the aid of self-denying brethren, assemble them in one place on the holy sabbath. Let him visit their houses, and pray with them, every month. Let him collect the children and youth into sabbath schools and bible classes. Let him encourage among them every means of intellectual as well as spiritual elevation; and how astonishing will be the change wrought, even in the course of one year. Instead of being objects of pity, shame, and aversion; many of them become pillars of light, and exert a purifying influence upon others. Is not this elevation worth more than all the necessary expense, even leaving out of the account all the eternal results? Let, then, another and another degraded portion be selected, and in like manner be regenerated and ennobled. Especially let no one who feeds at the table of our common Lord, and lives from week to week on the provisions of his house, refuse, promptly and vigorously to co-operate in the work of mercy, while a soul is perishing in ignorance and sin!

In the mean time, let our civil fathers look well to the execution of laws, which themselves have made, for the suppression of sabbath-breaking and immorality. And let them inquire seriously, Whether all our children and youth may not be brought under the influence of instructers of good character, and other moral restraints, a thousand-fold more efficacious, for preventing crime, than statutes, and prisons, and chains.

Our hearts rejoice to see new blocks of buildings going up to decorate our city. But what is that to the present and eternal elevation of these

thousand minds? Should we not then exult in the privilege of lifting all the degraded portions of our city, and of our land, into intellectual and moral grandeur? What object of ambition could there be, equal to that of thus creating an empire of righteousness—a world of intellect? Such monuments of glory shall remain, when earthly governments shall be no more, and the earth itself shall have passed away.

Never, methinks, was the language of God more distinct, than at the present crisis. To the rich he is manifestly saying, "Bring ye all the tithes into the store-house, that there may be meat in my house, and prove me now herewith, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes; and all nations shall call you blessed." To the ministers of religion, and to all his chosen, he is manifestly saying, "O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain: O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up; be not afraid; say unto the cities, Behold your God! Behold the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him." "When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory. He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer. This shall be written for the generation to come: and the people which shall be created, shall praise the Lord. For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary, to hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those that are appointed to death; to declare the name of the Lord in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem."

These are great privileges for God to confer on such worms as we are. Yet God has indeed placed them within reach. And if we will but do our duty here, we are only ripening for infinitely greater privileges and higher honours. He that is *faithful over a few things*, shall be made *ruler over many things*. Yes; when all our cities, and the earth itself, and these heavens shall be "wrapt in consuming fire," we may, "with the great multitude found faithful," enter that *City, which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God.* In *that* City, "THERE SHALL BE NO MORE CURSE, BUT THE THRONE OF GOD AND THE LAMB SHALL BE IN IT, AND HIS SERVANTS SHALL SERVE HIM. AND THERE SHALL BE NO NIGHT THERE; AND THEY NEED NO CANDLE, NEITHER LIGHT OF THE SUN; FOR THE LORD GOD GIVETH THEM LIGHT: AND THEY SHALL REIGN FOR EVER AND EVER."

APPENDIX.

The population of New-York city, in 1820, was 123,706. In 1825, it was 166,086: making an increase, in 5 years, of 42,380. Allowing the same ratio of increase, there is now a population of 185,000. There are in the city 101 churches, or houses of public worship: Of which 4 are Roman Catholic, 1 New-Jerusalem, 2 Unitarian, 2 Universalist, 2 Jews' Synagogues, 15 Baptist, 13 Methodist, 17 Episcopalian, and 34 Presbyterian churches, including the Scotch and Reformed Dutch. The remainder are Lutheran, Moravian, Friends, German Reformed, and Independents. The average number of regular attendants is estimated, by such as have made it a subject of special examination, not to exceed 400 to each house; which makes the number of those statedly attending public worship 40,400. After deducting 50.000, for children, for the sick, and for others necessarily absent, there will still remain NINETY-FOUR THOUSAND AND SIX HUNDRED, or *more than half the population, absenting themselves from the public worship of God!*

There are in the city 4 theatres and 2 circuses: most of which are opened from 4 to 6 nights every week. The number of shops and other places licensed to sell liquor by the small measure, is three thousand; or about ONE to every SEVENTH DWELLING-HOUSE! In addition to the violations of holy time, occasioned by steam-boats, and other public conveyances, by butchers, grocers, and other traders purchasing their stock from boats arriving from the country, upwards of ONE THOUSAND *shops, and other places, are opened for the sale of liquor or other things on the Sabbath!*

Nor is this view peculiar to New-York. A critical investigation of facts in other cities will develope similar results. In London, the whole number of churches and chapels of all denominations is estimated at 400. "If we calculate," says a late English writer, "that the average attendance is 500; which is certainly the greatest extent we can allow, and add 250 more for the fluctuating hearers, it will give a result of 300,000 persons. The population of this metropolis is estimated at 1,274,800. From which subtract the feeble minority above, and we find NINE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-FOUR THOUSAND EIGHT HUNDRED *persons neglecting the public worship of God!* It appears that of the commercial papers published in London on the Sunday, there are circulated, on the lowest estimate, 45,000 copies; and that upon the most moderate computation, between two and three hundred thousand readers of these papers are to be found in the metropolis alone. While the great number of pressmen, distributers, master-venders, hawkers, and subordinate agents, of both sexes, and of all ages, who are employed on the Sabbath, all tend to the most flagrant breach of the day of rest."

In the mean time, the number of deaths in New-York is about *five thousand* annually: in London, about *thirty-three thousand*.

THE

NATIONAL PREACHER.

Go....Teach all Nations....*Matt.* xxviii. 19.

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SERMON XXVI.

BY AARON W. LELAND, D. D.
CHARLESTON, S. CAROLINA.

THE PURE GOSPEL REJECTED BY THE PERISHING.

1 COR. i. 18.—*For the preaching of the cross is, to them that perish, foolishness.*

IN the Christian revelation, there is an evident purpose of infinite wisdom, that in all the provisions for man's salvation, his moral agency should be left free and uncontrolled. Instead of accommodation to human prejudices, there is ample scope for captious objections. And if additional proof were needed, of the divine origin of the Bible, it would be found in this characteristic. Were it a system agreeable to the narrow views, in unison with the selfish feelings, and gratifying to the depraved taste of human nature, it would more resemble the fabrication of man, than the workmanship of God. But as the current of its doctrines is so entirely opposed to our natural inclinations, as to render a moral renovation indispensable to a perception of the glory of revealed truth; all such ground of skepticism is removed.

Thus the obscurities and difficulties of revelation are admirably adapted to exhibit human character, and constitute this state of existence a real probation. For if the light of truth came upon the mind with resistless energy, and the operations of the divine government were clearly disclosed; if the motives and designs of infinite wisdom were fully explained, and the realities of the spiritual world completely laid open to view; one principal aim of this dispensation would be frustrated. On the one hand, there would be no field for the exercise of faith and humble confidence on the part of Christians; and thus a precious test of their submission and obedience would be destroyed. On the other, there could not be a full disclosure of the true feelings of the unrenewed heart. Because, as all would be evident as the noon-day sun, there would remain no choice in the matter of embracing the truth—no means of evincing whether its reception were cordial or compulsory.

In this respect, there is displayed a matchless skill, as well as a gracious

condescension, in adapting revelation to the actual character and condition of our race. While sufficient light is afforded to guide the sincere inquirer, there is an obscurity to perplex and offend the proud and self-confident. While the truth is accompanied by evidence abundantly satisfactory to every mind open to conviction, enough of mystery remains, to form an impassable barrier to those who are inclined to disbelieve the testimony of God. While to the eye of faith there appears a glorious system of wisdom and mercy, depraved reason and prejudice may discover little else than an assemblage of inconsistencies and absurdities.

It is not without design, then, that the great facts of revelation are made liable to misrepresentation; that its essential principles are arrayed against the pride of human wisdom; and that its blessed institutions are so obnoxious to abuse and opposition. Such a constitution of things is evidently intended to furnish a decisive criterion of human character—to exhibit, in striking contrast, the humble votaries of faith, who reverently bow to the authority of Scripture; and the adherents of a haughty, self-confident rationality, who will receive the testimony of God himself, no farther than it accords with their opinions and prejudices—and thus to elicit a fair and full manifestation of every man's real disposition and feelings.

Such, uniformly, has been the effect of the Bible, wherever its sacred contents have been made known. To all who have received it with penitence, humility, and confidence, as the infallible word of God, it has proved their pleasure and delight—their fountain of consolation—their guide to peace: while the self-righteous and unbelieving have transformed it into a subject of perplexity and disputation—*a cause of deeper guilt and more aggravated ruin.* The Gospel has appeared transcendently beautiful and glorious to all who have been savingly enlightened by the Holy Spirit—while, to the impenitent and skeptical, it seems obscure, irrational, and incomprehensible. The former rejoice in the scriptures, just as they are, and willingly yield to the obedience of faith: the latter are ever anxious to lower the standard of divine truth to the level of their views of fitness, and to mould its materials into a form suited to their unholy inclinations.

On these principles it is easy to perceive the real nature and causes of the insidious warfare, which is maintained, in various forms, against the essential doctrines of the Gospel. It is just an effusion of the malignity of the unsanctified heart. Its prevalence is an exact fulfilment of prophecy; and therefore an irrefragable proof of the truth and divine authority of that system which it is labouring to destroy. The emphatic declaration of the apostle, in the text, strikingly describes the state of feeling which now actually prevails, among many who enjoy all the external privileges of the Christian dispensation—*The preaching of the cross is, to them that perish, foolishness.*

In illustration of this passage, it will be attempted, to explain the import of the phrase, *the preaching of the cross*—to enumerate some of the *instances*

and *causes* of such preaching being accounted *foolishness*—and to describe the *fearful state and prospects* of those who hold it in such low estimation.

The preaching of the cross is a plain and full announcement of all the essential truths of that system which provides pardon and salvation for the lost and guilty. The cross is the symbol of that amazing expedient of infinite wisdom and mercy, by which a treaty of reconciliation is offered to convicted traitors against Jehovah's government. Its exhibition therefore must require a developement of the principles, and a defence of the doctrines, peculiar to this gracious dispensation.

The grand fact, which constitutes the very essence and glory of the Gospel, and which it is the leading object of the Christian ministry to announce, is, that He, who took upon himself the form of a servant, and offered up the sacrifice of Calvary, is *God over all, blessed for ever.* This gives to the cross all its glory and efficacy. It is on the supreme Deity of Christ—on the expiation made for sin by the Maker and Sovereign of worlds—that the whole fabric of evangelical truth rests. On any other supposition, the sacrifice of the cross was a very ordinary affair. If the Saviour of sinners be not God—if he be a created being, of whatever grade,—where is the *mystery of Godliness?*—Where those unfathomable depths of divine love, *into which the angels desire to look?* If Christ be only a servant of God, however exalted, what was there, in his appearance on our world, to constitute a new era in heaven, and to fill its inhabitants with astonishment and ecstasy? Did the heavenly host descend in rapture, and cause the mountains of Judea to reecho with their acclamations, because a *dependent creature* had *consented* to do his Maker's will? Whence the ascription of *glory to God in the highest*, and why do the courts above resound with a new song of praise to God for his redeeming mercy, if this redemption was effected by the labours and sufferings of one inferior to the Deity? Was such a dispensation as that of Moses, designed simply to prepare the way for a messenger of God to declare his will, and to seal the testimony with his blood, as many good men have done, both before and since? Why did patriarchs and prophets foretell his coming, and celebrate his praises?—Why did the continual offering of divinely appointed sacrifices, for many centuries, typify his sufferings?—And why did nature shudder, and shroud herself in darkness, at the consummation of those sufferings? All these things are utterly inexplicable, on the supposition that Christ is a created dependent being.

But view him as *God manifest in the flesh*—view him as voluntarily laying aside his glory, and descending from the throne of infinite majesty, to assume the nature, and expiate the guilt of a ruined race;—and we are struck with the appropriateness of all the attending circumstances. The splendid ceremonials of the Jewish ritual, and the raptured songs of prophets and of angels were well employed to prepare the way for the visi-

ble manifestation of Deity among men. The annunciation of the divine nature of the Redeemer must, therefore, be an essential part of *the preaching of the cross*.

Equally indispensable is a decided testimony to that perfect *atonement for sin*, which was made by this great offering. Here is the only foundation of human hope. This was the grand object accomplished by the Saviour's sufferings. Thus was completely solved the mysterious problem, which all created intelligences had deemed inexplicable—how sin could be remitted, without infringing the rights and tarnishing the honour of the divine government—and how the guilty could be rescued from wrath, without a forfeiture of the divine veracity. Never indeed was the divine law so completely vindicated, or the claims of justice so awfully asserted, as when the Lawgiver offered himself as a ransom. And no other possible manifestation of the malignity and atrocity of sin, of the divine abhorrence of all iniquity, and, at the same time, of the exhaustless treasures of redeeming mercy, could equal that which was witnessed on Calvary. As, therefore, Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so is the cross to be held up now, by its heralds, to a perishing world. Its atoning sacrifice is to be proclaimed, and its purchased blessings offered to lost sinners, as their only hope—their only remedy.

Another important part of *the preaching of the cross* consists in a full disclosure of *the entire depravity and helplessness of our fallen nature*. This doctrine lies at the foundation of Christianity. It is from the corruption of our race, the dominion of spiritual death, and the actual sentence of condemnation, that the necessity arises for *so great salvation*. If hope could have been afforded from any other source, if there had been any possibility of the sinner's expiating his own guilt, and restoring himself to the divine favour, the great Sacrifice would never have been offered. But until men are convinced of their apostacy and corruption, they will never be persuaded of the truth and necessity of the great atonement. And until they feel themselves justly condemned, and utterly helpless, they will never come as humble suppliants to a Saviour's feet.

The work of the *Holy Spirit, in enlightening and renewing the hearts of sinners*, and thus carrying on to their accomplishment the purposes of divine mercy, forms also an important portion of the message of the Gospel. It is the glorious achievement of the cross, to slay the enmity and subdue the stubbornness of the sinful heart: and the infinite blessing purchased by the Saviour's blood, is the gift of the Holy Spirit, to effectuate that transformation of character, that spiritual regeneration, without which salvation is utterly impossible. The preaching of the cross, therefore, must include an unwavering declaration, that *the working of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost* are indispensable to salvation.

It is moreover essential to a faithful *preaching of the cross*, that *justification by faith in Christ*, should be distinctly declared as the only ground of a sinner's hope. That view of the Gospel which represents it as bestowing upon man a power of fulfilling God's holy law—or as so lowering its demands as to render his imperfect obedience acceptable—is most dishonourable to God, and ruinous to the souls of men. No such provisions are found in the treaty of reconciliation sent from Heaven. So far from abrogating, the Gospel exalts and honours the law. So far from diminishing its strictness, it adds emphasis to its claims, and fully meets its unmitigated requisitions. Most gloriously has Christ vindicated the divine justice, by receiving its avenging sword in his own bosom, as the Substitute, or surety for sinners; and most effectually has he provided for their salvation, by rendering the exercise of pardoning mercy consistent with the principles of the divine government, and by working out for them a perfect righteousness, which may render them just before God. By faith, the penitent sinner receives all these blessings—is rescued from wrath, delivered from the guilt and bondage of sin, and made a child of God, and an heir of eternal life. Thus the triumph of the cross is complete, the pride of human merit is humbled in the dust, and all the glory of the salvation of sinners is rendered to the riches of redeeming mercy.

In fine, *the preaching of the cross*, includes a faithful denunciation of *eternal misery*, as the inevitable doom of all who pass from this state of probation, unrenewed by the Spirit of grace, unwashed in the blood of the Lamb.

Such are the essential principles of that system of redemption, which engaged the counsels of Heaven from eternity; and which was carried into effect, not like the work of creation, by a single word of the Son of God, but by his assuming human nature, enduring a long exile of toil and reproach, and humbling himself unto death, even the death of the cross.

With what gratitude, then, ought this Gospel to be received by the guilty, perishing creatures, for whose rescue from perdition it is designed. How should this display of divine compassion melt and captivate the hearts of those, whose sins have been thus expiated, and for whom an offer of free pardon and endless blessedness has been thus dearly purchased.

But *be astonished, O heavens, at this*—these tidings of salvation are received by many with chilling indifference—the sufferings of the cross are regarded with unconcern—the treaty of reconciliation, written in atoning blood, is by some contemptuously disregarded—by others repelled with determined opposition. These appalling facts display more of the malignity of sin, its blinding, deadening influence, and more of the rancorous enmity of the carnal heart against God, than all the other enormities which blacken the world's history. All other crimes appear less atrocious than this scorn

of a Saviour's love—this *trampling under foot the blood of the covenant.* While no finite mind could have conceived it possible, that Almighty love should be so slighted, yet the Spirit of prophecy announced this impious ingratitude, long before the incarnation. When Isaiah *saw the glory of Christ, and spake of him*, he also saw that he would be *despised and rejected of men.* And by all their hostility to the doctrines of grace, sinners are only verifying the description, which inspiration gave long ago, of their blindness and perverseness. By all their vain reasonings and presumptuous objections, they just corroborate revealed truth, and evince the desperate wickedness of the natural heart.

As in the days of the apostles, so in this period of increased light, *the preaching of the cross* is esteemed *foolishness.* The message of redeeming mercy is often received with utter listlessness—often with an evident disgust—and sometimes with an openly avowed hostility. In the apostolic age, it might be supposed that the resistance, with which the Gospel had to contend, arose from the prejudices of a Heathen or Jewish education, and from a very imperfect knowledge of Christianity. But, at the present period, the undiminished hostility, which is displayed against the pure doctrines of redemption, can be attributed to nothing, but that hatred to the ways of God, which the Scriptures represent as rankling in the natural heart, and for which they contain the only remedy.

It requires but a transient view of the religious state, even of enlightened and refined society, to see that to very many, now, *the preaching of the cross is foolishness.* While any temporal interest excites feeling, this theme is listened to with apathy. O, how often are those statements, which fill heaven with ecstasy, rehearsed to vacant, listless hearers! How many weep at fictitious woes, who contemplate the bloody scene of Calvary without a tear! How many hearts glow in admiration of the benevolence or heroism of a fellow worm, while entirely unaffected alike by the sacrifice or the triumph of the Son of God! How often do men express sentiments of the most fervent gratitude towards earthly benefactors, who would be ashamed of uttering one emotion of thanks to Him who *gave himself to die* for them! And is not this treating the Gospel as *foolishness?* But this heartless unconcern, criminal as it undoubtedly is, in the sight of God, is not so fearfully impious—affords not so appalling a disclosure of depravity, as the absolute disgust and contempt, with which the doctrines of the cross are sometimes received. In almost every community, there are those who utterly despise the whole system—who do not disguise their abhorrence—and who evidently hate the very mention of the subject. How indignant are such at any effort, in private conversation, to urge upon their attention themes connected with the dying love of Christ! How chilling is the effect, when such discourse is attempted, in many circles of refinement and elegance? And what a brand of infamy is affixed to the human character, by the fact, that from most such circles all these topics are absolutely excluded!

Let a man confine his conversation to such subjects as engaged the attention of Christ and his apostles—such subjects as now employ the hosts of heaven,—let him be accustomed in company, to bring forward the holy mysteries of redemption,—and by how many would he be shunned like a pestilence? And with what scornful hatred are those churches avoided by many, where nothing is heard but *Jesus Christ and him crucified?* Such are the open, unequivocal expressions of contempt and disgust, with which many treat the doctrines of the cross. Do not *they* esteem them *foolishness?*

But there is a class of the contemners of evangelical truth, characterized by more active zeal and decided measures. Far from the giddy thoughtlessness of those who hardly reflect upon the subject at all, and from the strange inconsistency of such, as profess to respect what they really despise and hate, —these feel and express a deep interest in religious opinions; devote time and attention to theological studies; and, as the result of their investigations, avow their utter disbelief of the peculiar doctrines of the cross; and undertake to demonstrate their falsehood and absurdity. They tell you, they have maturely examined the whole subject—that they have brought to the investigation all the aid that extensive reading and critical research can furnish—that they have carried the lights of science and philosophy into the dark regions of fanaticism—and have become perfectly convinced, that the whole system is an assemblage of the grossest errors. When, however, the array of argument is produced, its force seems to consist in the unwelcome impressions which the pure Gospel itself makes upon their minds. They can see no wisdom or fitness in such an atonement. They see nothing so very terrible in sin, as to require such an expiation. Pardoning mercy, say they, is one of the natural attributes of Deity; and the doctrine of eternal punishment seems to them too horribly inconsistent with divine justice to bear reflection. As for the substitution of the innocent for the guilty, and satisfying the claims of law by the blood of a sinless victim, they are amazed that any rational man can credit such absurd notions. Tell them of the maladies and wounds of the soul, which can only be healed by the Physician of Calvary—they can hardly conceal their contempt. Tell them plainly, as the Bible does, that they are lost, perishing sinners—that the wrath of God is revealed against them—that the avenging sword is uplifted, and that, unless they fly to the cross and embrace it by a living faith, they must sink to perdition—and you will witness the smile of derision or the frown of indignation. They esteem the doctrine of the Trinity as a monument of human credulity and folly. Their feelings are shocked beyond measure, at the incarnation of Deity, in the person of Jesus Christ. The personality and direct influences of the Holy Spirit appear useless and incredible; and the necessity of a change of heart excites their utter scorn. They cannot endure it. Their disgust is inexpressible.

Instead, therefore, of these offensive principles, they substitute a system, not modelled from the Bible, but from what they consider reason and propriety. This they adorn with all that is beautiful and attractive to the carnal

eye. Before this fair and flattering idol, of their own workmanship, they bow down in delighted homage. This is a religion they can love, for it flatters, exalts, and dignifies human nature! But as for human depravity, and other hated doctrines of the orthodox creed, they want words to express their aversion. The simple account of the matter is, that *the preaching of the cross*, in their estimation, *is foolishness*.

Such are the various grades of hostility to the vital principles of the Gospel, from contemptuous indifference, to malignant and rancorous opposition.

We now proceed to enumerate some of the causes, of this deplorable state of feeling towards the *truth as it is in Jesus*.

The depravity—the unholiness—of human nature, may be considered the grand cause of all the enmity which has appeared against the doctrines of grace. It is true, nevertheless, that the various degrees and forms, in which this enmity is manifested, depend upon the peculiarities of individual character and situation.

Destitution of early religious instruction, generally leads to an entire indifference to the whole subject. Persons who are brought up in prayerless, worldly families—whose young minds are not moulded by a pious influence—are usually found very insusceptible of religious impressions. In such hearts the power of ungodliness reigns uncontrolled. Uncultivated and waste, they produce nothing but *thorns and briers*. Nor is it surprising, that this numerous class of the hearers of the Gospel should exhibit an utter disregard and contempt of its authority. *The preaching of the cross is foolishness* to them, because they do not understand it, and will not take the trouble to examine it.

A similar apathy is frequently observed in persons who have been well instructed, when their whole souls have become engrossed in some worldly pursuit. Their heads and hands are so entirely occupied, that serious reflection is absolutely excluded.

Contempt of evangelical religion is sure to be exhibited in places where its professors are asleep or dead. In communities where real religion flourishes, where its power is felt, and its votaries are consistent and decided; whatever hatred may rankle in the breasts of opposers, they are not apt to indulge in contemptuous derision. But where formality and worldliness prevail, and no conspicuous standard of Christian character is visible—the hearts of sinners will be manifested. They will, without hesitation, avow, in how low and degrading a light they regard the doctrines of the cross. Their contempt and loathing are wholly irrepressible.

In many instances, the pride of rank and intellect is the cause why *the preaching of the cross is* utterly despised and accounted *foolishness*. The

lofty speculations of an aspiring intellect can with difficulty come down to the simplicity of the Gospel. The command, to come to the Saviour's feet with the humility of a little child, fills the proud heart of those *who are wise in their own eyes*, with indignation. They cannot endure doctrines, which level all vain distinctions, and require the noble, the affluent, and the learned, to assume the same station of penitence and contrition, with the lowliest peasant. They cannot consent to lay their honours in the dust, and address themselves only to sovereign mercy. It is beyond endurance, that the messages of grace should come *to them*, as condemned, guilty, and perishing sinners; and that as such they should be invited to the cross. Hence the scornful air, the undissembled disgust, with which so many, in high life, turn their backs upon *the preaching of the cross*. And hence, encouraged by their example, multitudes cluster round the standard of a haughty and malignant opposition to the Gospel.

While thus so many regard *the preaching of the cross as foolishness*, and earnestly wish it were utterly false; it is not wonderful, that efforts should be made to prove that it actually is so. Probably some, engaged in this opposition, are perfectly sincere, and actually suppose, as Saul of Tarsus did, that they are *doing God service*, by combating the doctrines of the cross. But whoever obeys the natural dictates of his own heart, and submits himself to the guidance of his own perverted, blinded reason, refusing to supplicate the illuminations of divine grace, will be likely to come under the power of *strong delusion to believe a lie*.

One other cause of opposition to the Gospel is found in the absolute contrariety of its requisitions, to the habits of life, which men have contracted, and which they are resolved not to abandon. While *the preaching of the cross* prescribes, as indispensable to salvation, conditions with which many, who have no doubt of being saved, wholly refuse to comply; and while it declares that eternal perdition will be the result of a course, which they are determined to pursue; it must be the object of their settled detestation. Hence the love of sinful pursuits and gratifications, and an invincible repugnance to a life of devotion, are the true reasons why many esteem *the preaching of the cross foolishness*.

It ought, however, to be kept in mind, while these causes are recounted, that the operation of each of them is rendered more efficacious, by the agency of that spirit of darkness, *that worketh in the children of disobedience*. To increase disgust against the plan of redemption, to exasperate the natural enmity of the carnal heart, to give a specious appearance to objections, and to enforce, with seductive arguments, the cause of unbelief, is the untiring employment of the grand foe of God and man. It is indeed the darling achievement of infernal skill, to inflate a poor worm with pride of talent, and fill his heart with hatred to the Gospel, and then persuade him that his hatred arises from its falsehood and absurdity. No event can afford the tempter

greater joy, than success in persuading perishing sinners to reject the only possible way of escape from eternal death, and to contemn, as foolishness, that doctrine which is the *wisdom of God and the power of God to salvation to every one that believeth.*

It only remains, that we briefly describe the fearful condition and prospects of all to whom *the preaching of the cross is foolishness.*

And here we have only to repeat the decision of the Searcher of hearts—the Judge of the quick and dead. His infallible Spirit has, in our text, divulged the tremendous fact, that the indifference, contempt, and disgust, which have now been described, are characteristics of THEM THAT PERISH. This authority, as well as the nature of the case, renders it certain, that all, who indulge such feelings, are *in the gall of bitterness and under the bond of iniquity—dead in trespasses and sins—treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath.* Nothing short of utter blindness of mind can be insensible to the glory of the Gospel—nothing but entire depravity of heart can render its doctrines offensive—and nothing but the most obdurate impenitency can resist the melting influence of a Saviour's dying love. It is utterly impossible, that a scornful neglect or disregard of the preaching of the cross should exist, without fearful guilt and imminent danger. All those, among the hearers of the gospel, who will finally be children of wrath, are now characterized by such guilt. And all the lost spirits in the world of wo, who once enjoyed the offers of mercy, cherished the same fatal feelings towards the plan of redemption. It was *foolishness* to them. Many, even in this land of light, seem to be ripening for the same tremendous doom. Whether in the ranks of open opposition, or under the false colours of pretended regard, the deadly symptom is upon them—a settled disgust and aversion to the *preaching of the cross.*

Say not, 'It is no matter what a man believes, provided he is sincere.' God has settled this question.—"*Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved; God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned, who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.*" Is there not then, appalling evidence, that those, who hold such preaching in contempt, occupy very perilous ground, and exhibit fearful tokens of the divine abandonment? And especially might not the angels in heaven tremble for those, who have enjoyed great light and privileges—have witnessed rich displays of divine grace—and have once felt a deep solicitude for their own souls—but who now despise and hate those truths, and that cause, which they were once *almost persuaded* to embrace?

How clearly and terribly, my hearers, does this subject discover the ungodliness of the unrenewed heart. Those feelings of contempt and hostility, towards what is most precious and glorious in the view of God,

constitute the summit of human guilt. That feeble worms of the dust should thus dare to sit in judgment on the divine administration, and pronounce that needless which God has declared indispensable, and call that folly which God esteems the highest wisdom, is not merely presumptuous;—it is inexpressibly *impious*.

How resistless is the evidence, hence arising, of the necessity of an entire change of heart—an entire change of feeling—to prepare men to dwell with God. No wonder then, that our Lord should declare with such emphasis, *Ye must be born again*, or ye *cannot see the kingdom of God*.

I beseech you, fellow sinners, lay these things seriously to heart. Do any of you habitually hear the preaching of the cross with heartless indifference—with a light and trifling temper? Beware, lest your heart become fatally hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

Are any of you conscious of disgust and aversion, produced by such doctrines? O, beware, lest that come upon you which is spoken in the prophets, Behold, ye dispisers, and wonder, and perish: Beware lest you convert the bread of life into the poison of death!

Have any of you already attained such a degree of blindness and perversity, as to persuade yourselves that the doctrines of the cross are really irrational and absurd, and that you are doing right in opposing and deriding them? Recollect, I pray you, with whose word you are contending;—whose wisdom you are despising! Let the chaff contend with the tempest, and the stubble with the devouring flame; let the glow-worm despise all the lamps of heaven;—but Oh, let not a worm contend with Omnipotence; let not dim reason reject all the splendours of the Sun of righteousness. *The redemption of the soul is precious*—Its rescue from perdition, and elevation to God's right hand, are objects too momentous, to be sacrificed to the pride of intellect, or to the fashion of a world which passeth away. *Receive*, then, *with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.*

SERMON XXVII.

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THE FINAL JUDGMENT.

HEBREWS, IX. 29.—*After this the Judgment.*

WHILST another year is ending, and time itself, as it respects us, is fast hastening to its close, the question very naturally arises, *What shall come after death?* The voice of inspiration replies, *After this the Judgment.* There is no need of entering upon a laboured proof of the doctrine so plainly declared, *That there will be a day of Judgment for mankind.* It is what seems written by the finger of God himself upon the consciences of men. The impression is nearly universal, with Pagans and Mahomedans, as well as Jews and Christians, that *every one of us shall give account of himself to God.* This impression is strengthened by a view of the very unequal and indiscriminate allotments of the present life. Here the virtuous are often the objects of hatred and relentless persecution. Here the man of ambition and dark intrigue, circumvents and treads down his more honest rivals. Here Providence often afflicts even the most pious; while the licentious, and proud, and oppressive, are, perhaps, suffered to enjoy uninterrupted prosperity. Now we believe, assuredly, that "God is just;" and we infer, that he will so exhibit himself by another and more equal distribution of his favours and frowns. We conclude with the wise man, "that God shall judge both the righteous and the wicked." Conscience and reason, then, unite with revelation, in saying, that "God hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness." No language can be plainer, and no event more reasonably anticipated.

With this absolute certainty before us, then, of a judgment for all mankind, it would be unnatural—it would betray awful insensibility to eternal concerns, not to inquire with all seriousness—

When will this universal judgment take place? What objects is it designed to accomplish? What connexion will it have with our future and eternal condition? We inquire then,

I. *When will the universal Judgment take place?*

The precise time, God has wisely concealed from every intelligent creature. "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man. No; not the angels that are

in heaven." But the text speaks of it, in general terms, as that which is to take place *after our death*. Other passages are somewhat more explicit, as to the time. The apostle Peter declares, "The heavens and the earth which now are, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire, against *the day of judgment*, and perdition of ungodly men." According to this account of the judgment, it will occur at the same time with the destruction of the world; "when," as the same apostle declares, "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth, also, and the works that are therein shall be burnt up." Paul gives a similar account of the *time*, as he comforts the church at Thessalonica, under persecution, with the prospect of the judgment, "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." Indeed, if God is to "judge the whole world in righteousness," what other occasion would seem so proper, as when the last of our race have finished their work on the earth, and the world itself is about to be destroyed? Would it not appear most suitable, that the public and final decision of our destiny, should immediately succeed the winding up of this world's drama?—the termination of all earthly allotments? When, if not at that deeply interesting crisis, will all things be ready for the great trial? *The final judgment, then, will take place after our death, and at the end of the world.* We next inquire,

II. *What are the objects, which the Judgment is designed to accomplish?*

On this point, it becomes creatures of yesterday to speak with profound humility, and especially to beware of contradicting what is revealed. The objects which Jehovah will accomplish by the universal judgment, are unquestionably vast and momentous, beyond all conception. Yet some of them are obvious to reason, or are plainly revealed.

Every person has experienced inconvenience and perplexity from the circumstance, that the real characters of men, in the present life, are but partially disclosed. Much the larger portion of human actions pass unobserved by the world; or the motives which prompt them are concealed. One design of the judgment, then, is to uncover these hidden springs, and lay open every dark retreat of human conduct. We are told, "there is nothing hid which shall not be revealed;" that "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil;" that he "will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart."

Another design of the judgment, is publicly to assign to men their proper deserts. This, we have before suggested, is not done on the earth. "All things here come alike to all." "There is one event to the righteous and to the wicked." But the future judgment is characterized, as the day of "revelation of the righteous judgment of God;" "in the which he will

judge the world in righteousness;" and will "render to every man according to his deeds." The mystery involved in the prosperity of the wicked, and in the unequal allotments, which have here marked the dispensations of Providence, will then cease for ever; and it will then be seen and felt, that every one is treated according to the strictest principles of wisdom and justice.

Another special design of the judgment, is to manifest and gloriously exalt the perfections of Jehovah. Revelation has indeed proclaimed his perfections, in language which need not be misunderstood. But his providence has often interposed a cloud between them and the eyes of men. We do not comprehend the wisdom of present occurrences. We see not the end from the beginning. A complete disclosure of both, will show to the universe the deep counsels of God, and the consistent and benevolent character of all his operations. He will then appear in the greatness of his *power*, and *majesty*—as he summons the dead from their graves, and folds up the earth and the heavens, like a decayed garment, to be laid aside. He will then appear in the glory of his *justice*, his *holiness*, and his *truth*,—while he examines, before his dread tribunal, the risen and assembled millions of our race, and renders to every one according to his works. All his perfections will then be illustriously displayed; for, says the apostle, "He shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe."

But this glory of the Divinity is specially to shine forth in the person of the Son. He it was, that "being found in fashion as a man, humbled himself, and became "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name, which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Accordingly, "the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." It is the *Son* who will come "in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory"; whom "every eye shall see;" and who, "in his own glory, and in the glory of the Father, and of the holy angels," shall "judge the world in righteousness." Then will he who humbled himself, and "became obedient unto death," be publicly recognised as "the Mighty God," "by whom, and for whose pleasure, all things are, and were created." Then will "every tongue confess that he is Lord." The conviction will then be universal, "that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father." This leads us to inquire,

III. *What connexion will the Judgment have with our future and eternal condition?*

Here let us not indulge in vain speculations, but examine simply the word of God. According to the Scriptures, the judgment will result in assigning to men *very different allotments*. It will recognise among them

two entirely different and opposite classes of character. One of these classes, which the Bible denominates "the righteous," will be graciously acquitted by the Judge, and publicly treated as his friends. The other, comprising all the impenitent, will be as publicly condemned, and driven from his presence. They "will have judgment without mercy." Such is plainly the account which Christ and the sacred writers have given of the final awards to the righteous and the wicked. We have the account in detail. Says the Saviour himself, "When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." And again; "The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; *they that have done good*, unto the resurrection of *life;* and *they that have done evil*, unto the resurrection of *damnation*." Thus broad and fearful is the discrimination which the great day will make between the righteous and the wicked. So entirely different are the awards in reserve for the two different classes of mankind. The difference will be great, as between holiness and sin; between cheerful submission to the will and providence of God, and unyielding rebellion against him; between cordial faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and wilful rejection of the only Saviour; between the splendour and joy of the celestial Paradise, and the gloominess and misery of hell. No wonder, then, that "as Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled." There will, indeed, be fearful reason for "weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth," with those who shall then "see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and themselves thrust out."

We are not to forget, my hearers, that these different awards of the judgment day will be *irreversible* and literally *endless*. All admit this conclusion, with respect to the *righteous*. But if the righteous are *finally acquitted* at the judgment, so are the wicked *finally condemned*. If the righteous are said to enter into "*life eternal*," so are the wicked to "go away into *everlasting punishment*." The Scriptures say not one word of any reprieve from this condemnation, or of any other period of merciful visitation. But they close with the most solemn assurance, that, from that awful day, he that is unjust shall be unjust still; and he that is filthy shall be filthy still; and he that is righteous shall be righteous still; and he that is holy shall be holy still. Other passages, of similar import, might be quoted: but if men will pour contempt on a single declaration of Jehovah

—if they will *make God a liar*—they would not be persuaded, though his voice from the heavens were a thousand times repeated. And *because they receive not the love of the truth, that they might be saved*, most justly may he *send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie*, and *be damned.*

I have thus endeavoured, with much brevity, to give a scriptural view of the final Judgment. On a subject so tremendously awful, I have chosen to present simply God's testimony. A practical inference from the whole is,—that the present life must be regarded as probationary. We are living here as responsible agents, continually adding to the number of actions, for which we must give account to God. How solemnly interesting, then, is this scene of our earthly pilgrimage! How inexpressibly valuable *is* time! How infinitely precious are the means of grace!—particularly those invitations of mercy, which meet us in the word of God, and address us from the sacred desk.

You, my fellow sinners, are the very individuals who must stand at the judgment-seat of Christ. You must mingle in that vast multitude, which the voice of the archangel and the trump of God shall assemble. And when your characters are all laid open, you must pass off to the right hand, or to the left, accordingly as it shall appear, that you have repented, and believed on the Son of God, or have neglected this great salvation. And are you diligently preparing for that day? Are you working out your salvation with fear and trembling? Are you *agonizing* to enter in at the strait gate? Are you escaping for your life?

Fellow mortals, your time of preparation may be far more brief than you now think. A few, *very few* more opportunities for prayer, and reconciliation with God, and your account is sealed up. While you hesitate, the recording angel may be writing your condemnation. In such circumstances, what are worldly honours, or wealth, or all your hopes of enjoyment here? The life, the *eternal life* of the *soul*, is the *one thing needful*—the *only* thing really important. You will realize this truth, when the last trumpet is sounding through the universe, and, with increasing agony or or ecstasy, millions of ages after the final sentence is pronounced. O, then, consider it *now*. Prepare for that judgment, *now*. To-morrow! where is it? Repent *to-morrow!* You may have far other work to do. God, and conscience, and your immortal interests plead, "*To-day*, if you will hear his voice, harden not your heart." "Behold, *now* is the accepted time; behold, *now* is the day of salvation." *Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. For he cometh, for he cometh, to judge the world, in righteousness to judge the earth, and the people with his truth.*

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SERMON XXVIII.

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PORTLAND, MAINE.

CONCERN FOR THE SPIRITUAL WANTS OF MEN.

PHILIPPIANS, ii. 20.—*I have no man like minded, who will naturally care for your state.*

THE rare and exalted character, which St. Paul here sketches at a single stroke, belongs to Timothy. The passage which contains it appears to have been written at a time when the apostle was particularly solicitous to obtain correct information respecting the state of the Philippian church. He was unable to visit Philippi himself. He could not immediately send Timothy; and among the persons then around him, there was no other on whose concern for the welfare of the church he could rely.

This passage suggests several remarks which have a direct and important bearing upon the object of the present discourse.

I. The first remark suggested by the passage is, *That the situation of mankind, in a moral and religious view, is such as ought to awaken the unaffected concern of good men.*

This proposition is, I conceive, fairly deducible from our text. The apostle evidently supposed it to be necessary that some one should care for the state of the Philippian church. Yet neither in this epistle, nor elsewhere, does he intimate that there was any thing peculiar in their situation, which rendered it more necessary to care for them than for others. On the contrary, that church appears to have been at this time in a remarkably flourishing state. It was furnished, as we learn from the introduction to the epistle, with pastors and subordinate officers. Of course, it enjoyed all the means of grace. Its members had recently given the apostle proofs of their affectionate remembrance, and their liberality, by sending him pecuniary supplies; and he expresses a strong persuasion, that God had begun a good work in them, and that he would perform it unto the day of Christ Jesus. Now if such a church, if persons professedly and hopefully pious, favoured with the enjoyment of Christian privileges, and disposed to improve them, still needed some one to care for their state, how imperiously does the situation of a very large proportion of our fellow-beings call for attention and concern? If it were necessary to corroborate this remark, it might easily be done. From the immense mass of information which has been collected and embodied by a zealous few, who care for the state of

* This Sermon, preached in behalf of the American Education Society, was furnished for publication in this Work, a short time previous to the Author's triumphant death.

perishing men, it would be easy to select a multitude of the most alarming facts, illustrative of the moral and religious situation of the world;—facts sufficient to convince insensibility itself, of the necessity of vigorous exertion, and to rouse the most torpid into activity.

But, can it be necessary to do this, after such a flood of light has been poured upon the situation of the dark places of the earth; bringing afresh to our view the fact long known, but little regarded, that they are filled, not with the habitations only, but with the temples and altars of cruelty and lust? Must we again lead you through the recently explored, and almost immeasurable wilds of paganism; again measure the length and breadth of this Arabian Desert of the moral world; again show you six hundred millions of immortal beings sitting in the darkness and shadow of death; and place before you the new-born infant sacrificed, or exposed by its parents; the widow's funeral pile; the blood-stained car of Juggernaut; with other sickening scenes from which even unsanctified nature recoils? Or, escaping from those regions of moral death to the shores of our own comparatively favoured land, must we repeat the calls which have so often summoned you to survey the waste places of her Zion, and to explore her moral wildernesses? Must we repeat the melancholy truth, that a large proportion of our countrymen are destitute of stated religious instruction, and that in consequence of the unexampled increase of our population, this deficiency is annually increasing, notwithstanding all the exertions which are made to supply it?

With these facts, and with the Bible before us, can any thing farther be requisite to prove that the religious state of a very large proportion of mankind is such as demands the most active, unremitting concern? If this be not the case, why has the all-wise God lavished such a profusion of care upon us? Why did he send his Son into the world? Why did his Son send forth disciples? Why direct them to pray the Lord of the harvest, that labourers might be sent forth into his harvest? Why was it his last command;—"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature?" Why did his first gift, after his ascension to heaven, consist of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, sent expressly to care, to watch for the souls of men? Why did those apostles ordain elders in every city? Why charge those to whom they left the care of the churches to commit the things which they had received to faithful men, who should be able to teach others also?

Has all this provision for the spiritual wants of men ceased to be necessary? Has such a change taken place in their character and condition, that watchmen are no longer needed? Are the enemies which once opposed their salvation dead, or asleep, or converted to friends? Does the broad road no longer lead to destruction? Are the fires of hell extinguished? Are the glories of heaven departed? Or, has the long expected day arrived in which it is no longer necessary to "teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, know the Lord?"

No, my Brethren, we have around us but too many proofs that this is not the case. You well know that the moral state of our race is still essen-

tially the same as in the days of the apostles: that the dangers to which they are exposed are still as great, and the enemies that oppose their salvation as numerous, as artful, and as powerful as ever; and that, therefore, they still need faithful watchmen to care for their souls. Has not experience taught you, my brethren, that such watchmen are necessary for yourselves? If so, remember, they are no less necessary to others. And if they are thus necessary, then care and exertion are requisite to provide them. By whom shall this care be exercised, this exertion made? Will you reply, By those whose necessities require them? And is it, then, needful to remind you, that by them it will never be done? Have not observation and experience taught you, that men are never more insensible to their spiritual wants, than when those wants are most numerous and pressing? This, this is the circumstance, which, above all others, renders it necessary to care for the spiritual state of mankind. They will not; no, they will not care for themselves. When would the Son of God have made his appearance in our world, had he waited till its prayers drew him down? When would he have sent his apostles to the heathen, had he waited till they solicited such a favour? And when, O Christian, would the Spirit of God have visited your heart, had he waited till it became spontaneously desirous of his presence? Why then should we expect the present inhabitants of the world to be more spiritually wise, more concerned for their eternal interests, than former generations, or than we ourselves have been? Like the merciful God, we must have compassion on those who have no compassion on themselves, and listen to the speechless cry of their necessities.

But why do I insist on this obvious truth? From many of the destitute an imploring cry is already heard. Wakened by the still small voice of God, or by the occasional warning of some transient messenger of the cross, they are becoming sensible of their wants, and beseech us to care for them. Hundreds and thousands would at this moment receive with gratitude and joy the fragments, the crumbs of your spiritual repasts. They cry for the bread of life, but there is none to break it to them. To provide a supply for themselves is beyond their power. And even if it were not so—if all the destitute in our own country and in the world possessed the disposition and the ability to care effectually for themselves, who is to care for posterity—for *your* posterity? Who is to make the *present* exertions which are necessary to preserve them from suffering a famine of the word of God? Of this, chimerical as the apprehension may appear, there is no small nor doubtful danger. Only suffer things to pursue their present course, and it is certain that your descendants, at no very distant day, will experience the fulfilment of that awful threatening; "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will send a famine upon the land; not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the word of the Lord." You can, in some faint degree, conceive of the miseries attendant upon a famine of bread, though the unmerited goodness of God has never permitted you to witness them. But what are these in comparison with the ills occasioned by a famine of the *bread of life?* As far inferior, as is

corporeal pain to mental anguish; as is the death of the body, to that of the soul; as are a few days of suffering to an eternity of wretchedness. To witness these evils, is to see the moral wilderness, with all its briars and thorns, its wild beasts and noxious reptiles, rapidly encroaching upon the vineyard of God. It is to see our golden candlesticks successively removed out of their places, and one burning and shining light after another extinguished; while none are set up in their room to dispel the hourly increasing darkness. It is to see the ways of Zion mourn because few come to her solemn feasts; the houses of God decaying, shut up, or desecrated; the temples of vice multiplying; the barriers which protect the sanctity of the sabbath prostrated; the Bible cast aside and forgotten as a useless book; the exertions of religious and charitable institutions suspended, and even their existence terminated; the few remaining disciples of Jesus destitute of strength, of activity, and almost of life, constantly diminishing in number; the rising generation growing up without God and without hope; and darkness which may be felt overspreading the land; while an insulted God, looking down from above, commands the clouds to rain no rain upon it, and pronounces it a spot rejected, and nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned. Such are some of the effects which result from a famine of the word of God; such the evils under which a large proportion of our own country and of the world now groans. If we wish either to remove this most terrible of God's judgments from those who are now suffering it, or to avert it from our posterity, immediate and vigorous exertion is indispensably necessary.

Will any one reply, These apprehensions are groundless? It is impossible that in our country, or at least in the most highly favoured parts of it, the gloomy scenes which have been portrayed should ever be realized! My brethren, let no one be too confident of this. Must I remind you that every spot occupied by the Church on earth is a spot which, like the territory of Holland, has been won from an ocean; and that nothing but an adequate mound can prevent that ocean from reclaiming what it has lost! This mound consists, under God, in a faithful and well educated Christian ministry. Remove this, or neglect to repair the breaches which are constantly making in it, and you will soon see the billows, whose rage it even now scarcely restrains, bursting upon you with irresistible violence, and sweeping away the labours of ages in a day. Where are now the seven churches of Asia, which rose and smiled like so many verdant islands amid the surrounding waves? Go to Asia, or take up the glass of history, and see.

II. A second remark, suggested by our text, is this: *Men who properly care for the spiritual state of their fellow-beings are rarely to be found.*

This was the case in the days of St. Paul. It has been so ever since; and, we are constrained to add, it is so still; though, blessed be God, in a less degree than formerly. Will any one attempt to disprove this assertion by referring to the numerous societies which have been formed, to the sums which are collected, to the zeal and activity which are displayed for the promotion of almost every religious object? To every thing which can be *urged of* this nature, I would allow its full weight. That much has been

done, that much is now doing to meliorate the moral condition of man, is readily acknowledged. Still there exists, I conceive, ample foundation for the remark, that men who are suitably concerned for the spiritual condition of their fellow-beings are very rarely to be found. It must be recollected that warmth and coldness are relative terms, no less in the spiritual than in the natural world. Our climate might be thought warm by a visiter from Nova Zembla; but how would it appear to a native of the torrid zone? So to us, natives of this frozen world, the present temperature of our spiritual climate may appear sufficiently high. But how would it appear to an inhabitant of heaven, were he condemned to reside among us? How would it appear to our benevolent Saviour, should he revisit the earth? Would he not find it intolerably chilling? Would he not regard the warmest love, the most fervent zeal, which are to be found among us, as comparatively cold? Would he not tell us that in comparison with what ought to have been done, almost nothing has been done?

And, to allude to a term employed by our translators in the text, how small a portion of that which is done appears to be done *naturally?* How much of the concern displayed for the destitute is *artificial;* how much of it is *forced* into action; what exertions, what importunities, what appeals to every principle of our nature are required to procure even the most scanty supply for their necessities? Alas, my Brethren, were the fervent apostle of the Gentiles now on earth, labouring, as he was wont for their salvation, would he not too often have occasion to address them in the language before us—"I have no man who will *naturally* care for your state?"

III. It will not perhaps be departing from our subject, certainly not from our object, to notice *some of the principal causes of this unconcern:* For a knowledge of the causes of existing evils is often necessary to their removal.

Of these causes, one is an inordinate and criminal *self-love.* To this cause the apostle ascribed the deficiency of which he complained. "All," says he, "seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." It is needless to remark, that this cause still operates with undiminished force. It is frost in the heart, and a palsy in the hand. It draws around us a magic circle, beyond which our affections and exertions with difficulty pass. It presents to our eye a false glass, through which our own interests appear immeasurably important, and the interests of others comparatively trifling. It is ever suggesting some scheme of self-gratification, or self-aggrandizement, which engrosses, and exhausts the vigour of the soul, and leaves nothing but spiritless languor for plans of benevolence. In a word, it prompts us to care so much for ourselves, that we find little leisure or disposition to care for others.

This cause, however, prevalent and operative as it is, does not alone appear sufficient to produce all the evils of which we complain. It does not, except in some few instances, prevent us from relieving the wants of the body. Why then should it prevent us from relieving the far more pressing wants of the soul? The most selfish individual among us would scarcely suffer a beggar to famish and expire at his gate. Yet how many, who are by no means slaves to avarice, suffer their immortal fellow-beings, while

within hearing of their cries, to expire under the pressure of famine! Inordinate self-love, then, however prevalent, is not alo cient to account for the existing indifference to the religious int mankind. We must seek a still more general and operative cau such a cause we may find in the prevalence of *unbelief*. We do brethren, properly believe the account which inspiration gives u spiritual state of mankind. Still less do we believe its awful des of the fate of those who die in their sins. Did we fully credit clarations of God, relative to these subjects; did we, like the apost *the terrors of the Lord;* concern for the spiritual state of sinful me be one of our main-springs of action; and to effect their salvatio be the great object of our exertions. Were such a belief univers valent in Christian countries, it would engage their whole popul one grand, combined effort, to rescue slaves of ignorance and d from impending ruin. Comparatively speaking, no tears would shed for merely temporal calamities; for they would be regarded afflictions, and not worthy to be compared with that far more ex and eternal weight of wretchedness, which must overwhelm the tent. Natural sympathy alone would then do more for the salv mankind, than Christian benevolence has ever done since the day apostles. This is not mere conjecture; it is a conclusion fou facts. For, look at the scenes which were exhibited in Europe, those dark ages, when men really believed the dogmas and superst papal Rome. See the churches which were erected, the convent were endowed, the treasures which were lavished, the numberless which were said, and the almost endless succession of prayers whi offered, for redeeming departed souls from the purgatorial miseri were supposed to be suffering. Had all the exertions thus mad deem sinners from a fancied purgatory, been employed under the d of an enlightened zeal, in arresting their progress to a real hel nation on earth would now be enjoying the benefits of a preach pel, and the Bible would be in the hands of every individual of o And why is this? Why has superstition possessed, apparently, power to touch the heart and open the hand, than faith has had, at these latter ages of the church? Because, I answer, our faith is that it scarcely deserves the name. Because the papists did, in on believe the existence of a purgatory; and we do not, or act as if not really believe the existence of a hell. Brethren, these thing not so to be. As far as the sufferings which we believe to await tent sinners beyond the grave, surpass in magnitude and duratic fancied sufferings which excited the compassion, and called forth ertions of papal devotees, so far ought we to surpass them in our and so far we should surpass them, did we properly believe the decl of eternal truth. We should then feel, that he who prevents but mortal from incurring those sufferings, takes more from the mass of misery, and adds more to the sum of human happiness, than wo who should banish sorrow from the earth, and secure the highest t felicity of the whole human race.

must, however, be acknowledged that there is another cause of su-
ess and inaction, which, perhaps, affects those most powerfully, who
ast affected by the causes mentioned above; and that is *despondency*.
a the persons, to whom we now refer, contemplate the situation and
ects of sinful men, as portrayed by the pencil of inspiration; when
rvey the mighty mass of human wretchedness, together with the
ently insurmountable obstacles which oppose its diminution, and the
powerful causes which are ever operating to increase it, they are
helmed, crushed, and paralyzed. They feel like men required to
the ocean, by the daily removal of a drop, while a thousand rivers
ceasantly pouring into its bosom. All that their utmost exertions can
, appears so much like nothing, that they almost resolve to attempt
g, and to say that nothing can be done.

ppears, then, that the three great causes, to whose influence all our
ncern for the spiritual wants and miseries of mankind is to be as-
d, are *selfishness*, *unbelief*, and *despondency*. And by which of these,
arers, permit me to ask, can you consent to be influenced? Shall it
fishness? Is any one willing to acknowledge, even to himself, that
controlled by a principle so base? Is any one prepared to say as
s, 'I renounce all pretensions to that charity which seeketh not her
; all pretensions to any union of feeling with the benevolent Re-
er; or any similarity of character to those whom he approves and
rds; and when the great Husbandman gathers in the immortal harvest,
all not be said, that any of the seed which produced it was sown by
and, or watered by my tears?' If this language appears too shocking
adopted, will any one say, 'Selfishness shall not control, but it shall
el me; it shall not entirely repress, but it shall limit my exertions?
ll preserve me from the dangers into which a too ardent charity might
e me, and prevent its sacred flame from rising too high.' My brethren,
y of you are in danger of loving your neighbour more than yourselves,
rpassing in benevolence the Son of God, or even of exceeding his
ties, it may perhaps be necessary to ask the advice of this base coun-
r. But if no such danger exists, its advice may safely be dispensed
And if no one is prepared to utter such sentiments in language, let
e express them in action.

all we then yield ourselves to the palsying influence of *unbelief?*
we plead a disbelief of God's declarations, as an excuse for disobey-
is commands? Even if we disbelieve, or explain away the declara-
of scripture, relative to the present and future state of sinners, how
we evade the no less plain and forcible language of *facts* which it
ds. The plain, the undeniable inference from all these facts is, that
ituation of mankind without a Saviour, without a knowledge of the
l, is unspeakably dangerous. Nor can this inference be avoided,
s we assert, that neither the apostles, nor our Saviour himself,
any thing of the matter. Unless we are prepared to assert this, we
, with the apostle, judge, *that since one died for all, then were all dead;*
f Christ died to redeem men from the *curse of the law*, from the *wrath*

to come, from the *power of sin*, and from *spiritual wickedness in high places*, then to all these evils and dangers are men exposed.

Yielding to the impressive language of these facts, and escaping from the insensibility of unbelief, shall we then plunge into the dead sea of *despondency?*—Believing the threatenings, shall we inconsistently disbelieve the promises of revelation, and forget the faithfulness and omnipotence of Him who has said to his Son, *I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession?* Could a Roman exhort his countrymen not to despair of the commonwealth; and shall we despair of the kingdom of Christ, supported and defended as it is, by the eternal purpose and oath of Jehovah? We talk of difficulties; but what are difficulties to Omnipotence,—to Him who speaks and it is done? Away then with every desponding thought: and while you contemplate a world in wickedness, remember who hath said, *The knowledge of the Lord shall fill the earth as the waters cover the seas.*

And now, who is prepared to deny that the principles, which lead to this melancholy unconcern for the spiritual wants of men, are base, sinful, and utterly unworthy of rational, social beings? Will you not, then, by displaying an enlightened, active, and liberal concern for your destitute fellow-men, evince your freedom from the power of such principles; and efficiently patronize the Society in whose behalf I address you?

With the great object of this Society you are already acquainted. By educating pious, indigent youth, of promising talents, for the gospel ministry, it seeks to supply the melancholy and alarming deficiency of religious teachers, which exists in our own country, and in the world. Including among its friends and supporters, Christians of different religious denominations, it aims at nothing less than furnishing all our destitute fellow-men, at home and abroad, with a well educated and pious ministry. Without derogating from the importance of other benevolent objects which claim and receive the support of the friends of religion and mankind, it may be said with truth, that the object of this Society is second in importance to no other. Its success is essential to the success of every other object of a religious nature. The exertions of Missionary societies must be circumscribed and paralyzed, unless suitable men can be obtained to be employed as Missionaries. The distribution of the Bible will effect but a comparatively small part of the good which it is designed and calculated to produce, if its contents are not explained by able and faithful interpreters, giving voice and utterance to its solemn truths, and pressing them upon the heart and conscience. Already are the scriptures in the hands of thousands, who, were they asked in the words of Philip to the Ethiopian nobleman, Understandest thou what thou readest? would be constrained to reply with him, How can we, except some one should guide us? It is by *hearing*, rather than by reading the word, that faith comes. It is by the "foolishness of preaching, that it pleases God to save them that believe." But "how can they hear without a preacher? and how can they preach except they be sent?" And who is to send them, if we do not? By *educating* pious, indigent youth for the ministry, we shall instrumentally

send many into the vineyard of our Lord, who, without our assistance, will never enter it. We shall aid Bible and Missionary societies, by furnishing the former with skilful interpreters, and the latter with faithful labourers. In a word, we shall put in motion the means which God has appointed for the salvation of men; means which he will therefore crown with success.

Nor are these, though the principal, the only beneficial effects which the efforts of this Society are calculated to produce. They have a powerful tendency to promote the best interests of our literary institutions. I need not inform those of you, who are acquainted with seminaries of learning, of the many temptations to which the youthful student is exposed from examples of indolence and vice. Nor need I remind you of the anxiety, which parents often feel, while reflecting on the necessity of exposing their children to these dangers. Now, how much must it tend to remove the causes of this anxiety, to introduce into our seminaries, annually, a number of youth distinguished for morality, piety, and diligence in literary pursuits? It would be purifying these fountains. It would be tincturing the streams which are to flow through our country, with ingredients of the *river of life*. Should no other beneficial effects result from the efforts of this Society, these alone would be sufficient to repay abundantly all our contributions and exertions for its support.

Again, the rapidly increasing population of the newly settled portions of our country is soon to give them a preponderating influence in our national councils. They will soon make our laws. Is it not then inconceivably important, in a political as well as religious view, that the men who are to exert such an influence, should early adopt the principles, and form the habits which belong to a truly Christian community? But this they will not do, if they are not furnished with the institutions of Christianity. It may be thought by some that the Society is designed to promote exclusively the interests of a particular denomination. But to this it will be a sufficient reply, that its patronage has been extended to young men of five different religious denominations, the natives of widely distant States, and dispersed through almost all the seminaries of learning in our country. Will it be said, that some of the youth patronized by the Society may prove unworthy of the assistance afforded them? This is doubtless possible: for what human plans and exertions are not liable to be frustrated? But such is the care and precaution which is observed by those who are intrusted with the management of the funds, in selecting objects of patronage, that instances must be rare indeed in which the funds can be misapplied. The improvements which have recently been made in the system of the society, by which a minute and faithful supervision is exercised over those who are patronized, in every stage of their education, renders this security still greater, and as great probably as the nature of the case admits.

And now, my brethren, with these facts before you, what will you say? or rather what will you do? I am aware that the calls upon your liberality are many and great; but they are calls which it seems impossible to disregard. They are the calls of immortal beings, perishing for want of the

assistance which it is in your power to afford. They are the expiring, agonizing calls of a drowning world: a world deluged by a flood of ignorance and misery, far more terrible than all the waters of Noah. Shall those, then, whom the arm of omnipotent grace has snatched from the fatal flood, rest unconcerned while millions are sinking around. "If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death,—if thou sayest, Behold we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul doth he not know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?" My brethren, thousands of your countrymen, and millions of your fellow-men are drawn unto death, and you cannot even say, "Behold we knew it not." If then, we refuse to care for their state, will not he who pondereth the heart consider, and he that keepeth the soul, will not he know it? and as we have refused to deliver the soul of our brother, will he not refuse to keep our souls? Has not the voice of inspiration said, "Whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" Much more then, may we conclude that the love of God never entered the heart of him, who, seeing his brother ready to perish for ever, and possessing the means of affording relief, refuses to afford it.

But I will not suppose that you need to be urged by motives of this nature. Appealing to your compassion, rather than to your fears, I will ask, If a Saviour had never been provided for the world, and could wealth or suffering procure such a blessing, what, with your present views of the spiritual state of mankind, would you give, what would you suffer, to purchase it for them; to draw down an all-sufficient Saviour from heaven, with pardon, and peace, and salvation, in his hands? Would any sacrifices, any sufferings appear too great for the attainment of such an object? My brethren, without making great sacrifices, without any personal sufferings, you can, in an important sense, do this. The situation of those who are destitute of the gospel is in effect the same, as if a Saviour had never been revealed. In vain, as it respects them, have the glad tidings of great joy reached our world. In vain have life and immortality been brought to light, and the gates of heaven opened. Of these wonders of redeeming love, of the only name given under heaven whereby men can be saved, they have never heard. He then, who shall send them the gospel, will instrumentally provide for them a Saviour, snatch them from perdition, and give them life and immortality.

He who restores sight to one that is blind, not only gives him eyes, but does in effect give him the luminaries of heaven, the colours which adorn the earth, the beauties of nature and of art; in a word, all the benefits which the faculty of seeing imparts. So he who sends the gospel to the destitute, gives them Christ, gives them a Saviour, and all the blessings which that Saviour has purchased. O what gifts, what blessings are these to be dispensed with a mortal hand. Who will not spring forward with eagerness to share the privilege of dispensing such treasures? Who will not *thank that* God, who thus allows us to imitate himself?—to share with

him the happiness of doing infinite good? Compared with this privilege, even the miraculous powers of the apostles, which gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and life to the dead, shrink into insignificance. We may place a Saviour, a heaven within the reach, not of one only, but of thousands. It may be fairly presumed, that every pious, indigent youth, who is educated for the ministry, will preach the gospel to at least a thousand souls. The question, then, whether a pious young man shall be prepared for the ministry, whether the means necessary for his preparation shall be afforded, comes to this; Shall a thousand immortal souls be favoured with the gospel, or possibly live and die, and perish without it? What a question is this for the consideration of accountable beings! Is there, can there be any doubt respecting the proper answer?

Again; reasoning from what has taken place within a few years, it is not perhaps too much to suppose, that every pious and well-educated youth, who is introduced into the sacred ministry, will be instrumental of the conversion and salvation of one hundred persons. These, in their turn, will prove instruments of converting and saving others: some of whom may also become ministers, and preach the gospel to thousands after we are laid in dust. Thus the happy effects produced by one whom we assist to educate, like a river widening as it runs, will flow down to posterity, and produce consequences which finite minds cannot estimate. Compared with such results, how worthless, how insignificant does wealth appear! And yet, when employed in bringing about these results, how unspeakable is its value! Viewed in this light, it is the most valuable of all temporal gifts which Providence bestows: more valuable even than intellectual talents, or literary acquirements; since he who possesses it may call into the service of Christ greater talents than any one man ever possessed. He may exert a power over minds little less than creative. He may call from the poverty and obscurity in which it now lies, the most vigorous intellect; may develope its energies; cause its faculties to expand and brighten; and send it forth to promote, beyond all calculation, the glory of God and the happiness of men; he may thus prepare it to shine hereafter with a great multitude of others, as the brightness of the firmament and as the stars for ever and ever. What, my hearers, is the building of a palace, a pyramid, or a city, in comparison with the erection of such a pillar as this in the temple of our God above?

Learn then, O learn, ye wealthy, the true value of riches! Learn it at the foot of Immanuel's cross. Learn it of him to whose words we have been attending; and who by that cross was crucified to the world, and the world to him. Were he now on earth and possessed of your wealth, to what end would he apply it? But the example is too bright for the imitation, almost too dazzling even for the eye of this cool, calculating age. Christianity, at least as she exists in our hearts, seems to feel, in common with men, the contracting influence of old age, and to have lost the sympathetic, compassionate ardour, which warmed her youthful bosom. O to see her once more in her pristine form, adorned with the beauty, and strong with the vigour of renovated youth; breathing that fervent benevolence

which she inspired when she first descended from the bosom of Infinite Love; when, not wealth, but blood, was the price paid for the privilege of communicating her blessings to an ungrateful world; and when that price was paid by her disciples more cheerfully than a small portion of wealth is given now. Blessed be God, some symptoms of this desirable renovation begin to appear. Christianity, as it exists at the present day, resembles, in some faint degree, Christianity as it glowed in the breasts of apostles and martyrs. But, brethren, let us strive to make the resemblance more perfect. Let us convince mankind that our heaven-born religion still glows with the ardour of youth, still breathes the angelic sentiment, *Glory to God in the highest; on earth peace, and good will to men.* And let us never forget, that our approximation to the standard of primitive Christianity, must be estimated by the degree in which we make Christ, and his cause, all and in all, and manifest a readiness to do all things, to suffer all things, and to part with all things for his sake.

SERMON XXIX.

By AUSTIN DICKINSON, A.M.

SCRIPTURAL MEASURE OF BENEVOLENT EFFORT.

Hebrews, xii. 16.—*To do good, and to communicate, forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.*

Who that expects to meet the Lord Jesus in the heavens, and to reign with him for ever, would not rejoice to be able to say, *I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work thou hast given me to do?* But the question is sometimes asked, How much are we required to do, that we *may finish our course with joy?* The best answer to this question, is that touching eulogy of the Saviour, *She hath done what she could.* It is to be feared, however, that many, even of those who bear the name of Christ, and hope to share his eternal glory, have not yet come to any settled conviction, *that they are bound* TO DO ALL THEY CAN *to advance his kingdom.* To such persons we would suggest a few thoughts on the *Duty*, the *Privilege*, and the *Manner* of contributing for this great object.

I. As it respects the *Duty:*

Your relation to the great Redeemer and Judge, as *accountable stewards of his bounty*, makes it your duty to work for his glory, and for the advancement of his kingdom among men. *What hast thou that thou didst not receive?* Your talents, your property, all your opportunities of usefulness, are from God. He has given them, or rather *loaned* them to you, for a few fleeting years, and expects you to give account of the purposes for which you improve or abuse them.

By the very *nature of your Christian profession*, you are also solemnly bound to devote yourself and your possessions for the advancement of Christ's kingdom. In entering into covenant with his church, if you do *it heartily*—if you do it without gross hypocrisy—you make a voluntary sur-

render of yourself and of your all to Christ: you promise before God, angels, and men, to be *the Lord's*. With the vows of God on your conscience, then, you are virtually pledged *to do what you can* for advancing his kingdom, not merely in your own soul, but in the souls of others to whom your influence may extend. The primitive Christians not only professed, but actually exemplified this spirit of Christ. The apostles "counted not their *lives* dear unto them, so that they might testify the gospel of the grace of God." And their first converts did not hesitate to make great sacrifices to aid those intrepid missionaries in rescuing others from the darkness of heathenism, and from the damnation of hell. "As many as were possessors of lands or houses, sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles' feet." How many a modern professor, though rich, would shrink with disgust from the suggestion of his *selling lands* for a like holy purpose! But the man, who will let a sinner go down to the second death, rather than part with lands or money to save him, has not the spirit of Him who died for sinners. He does not love his neighbour as himself. He has not the spirit that reigns in heaven.

A proper regard for *the honour of Christ and his Church*, also, binds you to be conspicuous, according to your ability, in exertions and sacrifices to advance the Gospel. If, by wilfully withholding, you give the world occasion to say, 'that you are as selfish, covetous, wordly-minded, as they are;' you thus bring reproach and shame, not merely on yourself, but on the sacred name of Christ. You thereby cause many to "blaspheme that worthy name." But if, on the other hand, you show before an ungodly world, that you really regard the honour of Christ and the eternal interests of man,—you thus compel others to admire the benevolent spirit of the Gospel; and perhaps lead many to unite in glorifying its Author.

You are bound, likewise, by *infinite obligations of gratitude* to the Saviour, *to do what you can* to extend his Gospel. O, think of the eternal height of that throne from which He descended; think of the dreadful curse of God to which He submitted: think of those endless agonies from which He redeemed you; think of that eternal weight of glory to which He invites you; and estimate, if you can, your obligations to the Saviour: and then, act worthy of Him who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.

The *value of immortal souls* should also stimulate and compel you to make great sacrifices, if by any means you may enlighten and save some. You know that many millions, now on the earth, are involved in gross idolatry and crime; ignorant of the only true God and of the only Saviour. You know that every one of them has a soul, that, like your own, must live and expand for ever. You know that every one of them, by being furnished with Living Bread, and growing for ever in the knowledge and likeness of God, is capable of inconceivably more happiness, than has yet been enjoyed by all created beings in the universe;—or by sinking for ever in guilt, is capable of more misery, than has yet been endured by all the millions that have lived on earth or in hell. All past enjoyments or sufferings of all creatures in heaven, earth, or hell, have been but *temporary*: they can, there-

fore, bear no comparison with the bliss or wo of *one* soul, measured by *Eternity*. Every soul of every sinner on earth, then, is immeasurably precious. And you know that the *New Testament in Christ's blood*, if received in faith, can prepare idolaters, as well as you, to stand faultless before the throne; and to become partakers of that "exceeding and eternal weight of glory." But "how shall they believe in Him, of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent?"

Viewing yourself, then, as *a steward of God's bounty*—pledged *by a Christian profession*—inseparably connected *with the honour of Christ*—bound to Him *by infinite obligations*—and surrounded *by millions*, each of them *more precious than worlds*—does not the *Duty* of exertions to save them bear upon you with infinite weight? Under such responsibilities, must lands, or houses, or money, or family advancement, or ignoble ease, be your chief desire? Must your immortal mind, your heaven-born spirit, be here wrapt up in *selfishness* and *local* interest? Or shall it embrace the human family as a common brotherhood; and *do what it can*, to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus?

II. But, to contribute for the advancement of Christ's kingdom is not merely a *Duty;*—it is a glorious PRIVILEGE.

The habit of giving with a proper spirit, tends continually to *widen and elevate the mind*. By employing our hearts and hands in works of charity, we become co-workers with God—we share in the honour of executing His benevolent plans—we become associates with those loftier "spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." By such employment our character is elevated in the scale of intellectual and moral beings. We take a higher rank among the creatures of God; and are qualifying ourselves, by healthful exercise, for still more elevated and more honourable employment in His kingdom of glory;—qualifying to become kings and priests unto God for ever and ever.

The habit of contributing, with a proper spirit, is a source of purest *enjoyment* to the giver: and the more expansive his benevolence, the more does his felicity resemble that of the SUPREME. He, whose heart has glowed with benevolence from eternity, and who, in return, has received the homage and gratitude of uncounted millions—He, who knows what of pleasure or of pain has dwelt in every bosom—He hath testified, *It is more blessed to give than to receive*. And every man, who, in the spirit of Christ, has eminently contributed to bless the world, will heartily respond to this testimony. If we look abroad among our acquaintance, we find, perhaps, one among a thousand, who is evidently *living not to himself;* but whose mind is ever contriving, or whose hand is labouring to augment the means of spiritual blessedness; and we involuntarily pronounce him *the happiest man among the thousand*. He is happy in life and in death. For while with one hand he scatters blessings on the world he is leaving, with the other he reaches forth to an unfading crown, and to imperishable riches at God's right hand. But, O Death! how terrible art thou to that man who is at ease in his possessions! who loveth them more than his neighbour or

his God! and, O Eternity! Eternity! how long and how dismal will be the period of thy revolutions to that man who *trusts in these uncertain riches;* and *is not rich towards God!*

III. To those who feel, in some measure, the Duty and the Privilege of contributing to advance the Gospel, we would say as to the *Manner;*

In the first place, as far as the nature of the case will admit, *have some settled plan*, or *system*, in regard to the amount and particular objects of your religious charities. Every man, of common intelligence, feels the importance of previous arrangement, and order, in the management of his *temporal* concerns. How then, without guilt, can he be content to have no system in this important work? It might be of incalculable use to the individual, as well as to the general cause of benevolence, if each Christian would, at the commencement of the year, sit down, and, with the map of the world and the realities of eternity before him, make a solemn consecration of such amount, or of such proportion of his income, as, in sober judgment, he *can* contribute during the year. In such a transaction he would not dare deliberately to put off God with a pittance. Or rather, I should say, in such holy intimacy with the God of benevolence, he would feel his heart new-opened—he would have no disposition to stipulate in penurious measure. Such special acts of consecration are repeatedly recommended by Scriptural precept and example. "Vow, and pay unto the Lord, your God: Let all that be round about him bring presents unto Him that ought to be feared." "And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and raiment to put on; then shall the Lord be my God; and of all that thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto thee." It is impossible not to regard with unqualified respect the few instances of a similar character known at the present day. And were such examples common in the Churches, we should witness a much stronger and steadier flame of benevolent enterprise. Prone, as God knows even good men are, to pervert His gifts for *selfish* purposes, He does very properly require of them a special bond—a solemn, irrevocable covenant—devoting a reasonable portion for His service and glory.

As preparatory to the foregoing, it would not be amiss, especially for those who complain of frequent calls, to make a little estimate of what they have given the year past, and to compare the amount with what has been needlessly or wickedly expended! O, shrink not from this estimate, however mortifying to spiritual pride; for a full reckoning must one day be made, under circumstances infinitely more solemn: and then wo unto him who now dealeth with himself deceitfully.

In contributing for the spread of the Gospel, it is likewise important, as far as possible, *to act in concert with others*, in regard to the time of giving, and the particular objects to be accomplished. Union is strength. And human nature, in all, is so constituted as to be powerfully influenced by example. It is for this reason that we are commanded to "let our light so shine before men, that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father who is in heaven." The well known example of *a certain poor widow who cast*

in two mites, has exerted an influence, for eighteen hundred years throughout the Christian world; and will continue to do so, till the *consummation of all things*. Let *no* individual, then, presume to say, that *his* example is unimportant: for GOD, *who seeth not as man seeth*, can cause the humblest offering to give new impulse to the charities of a neighbourhood, or nation.

It is important, likewise, to maintain *uniformity* in the practice of giving, whenever there is a reasonable expectation. For, one individual, by withholding, may dampen the ardour of *many*. And the most generous benefactor may suffer materially in his character, and thus injure the general cause, if on some occasions he exhibit a total want of kindly feeling, and incur, whether justly or not, the charge of *meanness*.

In addition to pecuniary gifts, *every* person, however limited his influence may seem to be, should inquire seriously, in what manner his peculiar *circumstances*, or *talents*, may enable him to advance the Gospel. Some may combine the *industry* of a neighbourhood, or of an extensive circle of acquaintance, in works of Charity. Some have the tongue of persuasion, or the pen of a ready writer, and may enkindle others

"With thoughts that breathe and words that burn."

Some, by a word fitly spoken, may, with the blessing of God, put it into the heart of a single family, here and there, to support a Missionary, or to educate a Christian Minister. Some, by the extensive circulation of a Tract, or other Religious Publication, may accomplish a thousand fold more, than by pecuniary gifts. In almost every village, there is perhaps some one individual, who, by a little self-denying effort, might bring all its families under the influence of Periodical intelligence; and thus, indirectly, aid all our benevolent institutions. Every individual, male or female, by occupying the talent which God has given, may secure that blest eulogium, *She hath done what she could*. At present, the impression is very general that some five or ten years hence, we shall look back with surprise on the little that is now doing. A plain confession that, with all our self-complacency, we are very far from *doing what we could*; and are therefore verily *guilty*. At the same time, according to the usual ratio of deaths, in less than ten years, about THREE HUNDRED MILLIONS of our race must pass into eternity—most of them now ignorant of the *only Name given under heaven, whereby men can be saved*. Who, then, that knows these facts, can refrain from new and memorable efforts for spreading the knowledge of Jesus Christ?

Finally; *what thou doest, do quickly*: for time is on the wing. *This year thou shalt die. This night thy soul may be required of thee.* Thousands are dying every hour: And soon will the Judge descend with power and great glory, to *reward every man according to his works*. This will be the rule of evidence on that great day. And no other is needful, for now, settling the question, whether you *be in Christ, a new creature*. Here is room for demonstration, what *God you are serving*—for what world you are preparing—what is your great *object of pursuit*—what your *rule of action*—what your *heart*. And here may be at once decided, what shall be your transport or terror, when the heavens and the earth are shaken *by the voice of the arch-angel and by the trump of God*.

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SERMON XXX.

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PRIDE ABASED BY THE GOSPEL.

1 CORINTHIANS, i. 29.—*That no flesh should glory in his presence.*

THE gospel found the citizens of Corinth immersed in vice, and devoted, with an almost idolatrous attachment, to the false philosophy, and artificial eloquence of the Greeks. They had their masters in each of these departments, who attracted crowds of pupils, and who, as rivals, were sustained, and cheered in their competitions for intellectual fame, by the praises of their respective followers. After their professed reception of Christianity, the Corinthians still clung, with fond tenacity, to the wisdom of words; valued to excess miraculous gifts; boasted of their attainments in knowledge; and sought in the preachers of the gospel the same attributes, which they had been accustomed to admire in their heathen teachers. Hence parties arose, and divided the church with unhallowed contentions. Each had his favourite leader, who was applauded, chiefly for his supposed proficiency in the rules of reasoning, or his skill in the artifices of a studied rhetoric; while, in the eyes of his partial friends, it was a crime even to call in question his superiority to all competitors. From the heat and acrimony of their disputes, it seemed as if the Corinthians ascribed the success of the gospel to the decorations with which it was recommended to the world; and it was too plain, that, with all their professions, they had little experimental acquaintance with its transforming power. To correct their errors, and to humble their pride, is evidently a prime object of the apostle, in the context. He reproves their divisions, their party zeal, and their extravagant antipathies and predilections, as hearers of the word; he gives to the gospel the praise of achieving, through a divine influence, the salvation of men; and he pours contempt on those distinctions, by which the hearts of the Corinthians had been inflated.—"We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called," or *have called you to the knowledge of Christ, and his salvation;* "but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are; THAT NO FLESH SHOULD GLORY IN HIS PRESENCE."

The text, in its connexion, suggests this sentiment: IT IS THE PURPOSE OF GOD, IN THE DISPENSATIONS OF HIS GRACE, TO STAIN THE PRIDE OF ALL HUMAN GLORY.

1. In illustration of this sentiment we remark, first, that the general plan of grace, disclosed in the gospel, *originated wholly with God.*

Men, proud of their sagacity, and impatient of submission, would prescribe to their Maker himself, the principles by which he should act,—regulate, by their limited views of public justice, his conduct towards all intelligent beings,—and arraign him, for acquittal or condemnation, at the tribunal of their own infallibility. Not a few of the theological controversies, with which the church has been agitated, relate rather to what is becoming in God, than to what he has actually done, or revealed it as his purpose to do. All would see the conceited folly of a child, who should dispute vehemently against political measures he could not comprehend, or who, incapable of pursuing the steps of a mathematical demonstration, should pronounce as impossible and absurd, all the grand results of the Newtonian philosophy;—yet it is not so readily conceded that a creature of yesterday, confined to a little spot, and deriving his all from an intelligence and benevolence above him, is of too narrow an understanding to explore the heights, and fathom the depths, and grasp the infinitude of God Almighty. This diminutive creature, to whom his own existence is a mystery,—to whom every insect, every blade of grass, every ray of light, is pregnant with wonders, would prescribe what is to be done in all worlds; ordain a new Providence upon earth; kindle a brighter radiance in the heavens; and dissolve by a touch the chains, and bolts, and prison-walls, prepared by eternal justice, for rebels and outlaws. But self-sufficient as man is, he has not been consulted upon any of the great purposes of infinite wisdom. No inquiry was made of him, concerning his own existence and allotments, or the rank and condition that should be assigned to other beings. He was not asked, whether sin should be permitted to mar this beautiful creation; nor was he allowed to suggest a single hint on the possibility, or the means of human salvation. On all such subjects God determines as he pleases. At the very outset then, pride feels itself neglected and scorned. "Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?"

2. The *plan of salvation itself* is eminently fitted to abase human pride.

Man would have a scheme of mercy, flattering to the notions, he loves to entertain, of his own dignity and excellence, exalting him to happiness, and grandeur, and immortality, as his birth-right; and giving him, what the lofty-minded stoic had feigned—a kind of equality with God, in independence and virtue. He would enjoy his elevation, here and hereafter, with such conscious self-complacency and proud contempt as are felt by the bloated sons of wealth, passing by the hovels of the poor, or the homely forms that ply life's vulgar occupations. He would carve for himself his high destiny. He would mark with his own finger the way that conducts to glory. If God must interpose, let it be such an interposition, as shall proclaim the worthiness and importance of the objects of his kindness, no less than the omnipotence, and majesty, and righteousness, and mercy, of their Deliverer. Let there be wonders on earth, and signs in heaven. *Let the heavens* cleave asunder, and a visible arm of strength be let down

from the regions of eternal day. "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them, and be clean?"

The plan, which the Most High has revealed, annihilates all such aspiring imaginations. It assumes as a first principle, that man, allied in intellect to angelic minds, is yet despoiled by all his moral loveliness, a spiritual bankrupt, a rebel, bound over to everlasting perdition. To him, his Father's house has no attractions; his Father's presence creates in his bosom only gloom, and terror, and despair. Christianity tells him plainly, that he cannot be justified, that he cannot advance one step towards justification, by all his resolutions, his tears, his sacrifices, his sufferings. If he repent, it is because his obstinacy is subdued, and his heart melted, by the sovereign energy of the Holy Spirit. If he is pardoned, it is through the blood and righteousness of an incarnate God. "He was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth." Yes; another receives all the glory; while the sinner, casting himself at the footstool of eternal mercy, counts all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord. Where are his duties and his virtues now? Salvation by the cross! How it puts to shame and to silence all his boastings, and lays his honours in the dust.

3. The *circumstances under which the great Author of salvation appeared and lived in the world*, were adapted to stain the pride of all human glory.

Prophecy had described the promised Deliverer as a King, higher than the potentates of the earth, extending his dominion over all the nations and tribes of men; and the Jew, warmed by these descriptions, had invested his Messiah in all the pomp of wealth, the splendours of royalty, and the terrors of military conquest. To him, who should proclaim himself as their supreme Sovereign, and claim their undivided homage, the Gentiles also would naturally ascribe an external magnificence, such as they had been accustomed to admire, in their own monarchs, heroes, and statesmen; they would in imagination gather around him all the fascinations of genius, science, rank, affluence, and power;—and we may easily conceive the disappointment they would feel, should they behold him treading in the lowliest walks of life, choosing as his associates the humble and unlearned, familiar with all the forms of blameless poverty, and neither coveting, nor commending any of those honours, with which the world loves to encircle the brow, and eternize the names of her favourites. Such was the disappointment of both Jews and Gentiles, at the manifestation of the Son of God. It was a manifestation, that seemed purposely to mortify and shame all the notions of superiority and greatness, they had ever before cherished. "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." As no sound of trumpets, no human acclamations signalized the nativity of him, whose birthplace was a stable in Bethlehem, and whose parentage corresponded to the lowliness of his infancy; so no subsequent events of his life, in the view of the worldly ambitious, served to redeem him from the disgrace of his original obscurity. Fame, as the reward of secular exploits, he never sought: he treated it as worthless. Profound as was his wisdom, he never displayed it for his own aggrandizement; and vast as was his power,

he never exerted it, but in deeds of beneficence. He seemed like humility, meekness, gentleness, and purity, personified; going forth, under a load of sorrow, to teach, by his own example, the littleness of all sublunary grandeur; to bless the miserable, though his enemies; and to kindle in the bosoms of men, such affections and hopes, as should displace, or consume all the elements of earthliness, sensuality, and vain-glory. Remote from the halls of princes, and the schools of learning, he was disciplined to the toils of his future ministry, by acts of filial duty, and by the labours of an occupation as severe in its requisitions, as it was unhonoured and unsung. After his entrance upon the more public services of his embassy, when his divinity was attested by miracles on earth, and voices from heaven, he continued to evince the same indifference he had manifested in the lowly character of the carpenter, to all the proud distinctions of human greatness. While he preached righteousness, healed diseases, and put in requisition all the powers of nature, to sustain his authority, as the Legislator and Redeemer of mankind; he still exhibited an unostentatious simplicity, and submitted to the most humiliating offices of philanthropy. Wealth and equipage, he had none. "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." So he lived; and, in full coincidence with the undeviating testimony of his life, his death seemed like a designed inversion of all the notions engendered by pride. In his whole history, from the manger to the cross, there was nothing which did not present an example of a *taste*, a *spirit*, a *character*, as hostile to the ordinary principles that govern human beings, as contentment is opposed to avarice,—unobtrusive modesty to the pageantry of power,—and patient endurance of every evil, to the fierceness and restlessness of ambition.

4. *In his selection of individuals to the blessings of his kingdom*, God exercises a sovereignty, which pours contempt on all the pride of man.

He looks upon the whole family of Adam as rebels, who have forfeited his kindness; and from the corrupt mass he separates to himself such portions, as he had predestinated to so exalted a privilege. For he saith to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then, it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." In his choice of men "to the adoption of sons," the peculiar reasons for his preference are always concealed; and his conduct is often marked by a conspicuous disregard of all that confers elevation and influence among the sons of pride.

Is genius an envied distinction? Coveted as its honours are, they procure no favour with him who hides the things of his gospel from the wise and prudent, and reveals them unto babes. To men of no intellectual pretensions, the Word of God often comes with resistless power, conquering all their obduracy, and impressing on their hearts his own lovely image; while minds, fitted for the loftiest and widest views, and formed to draw in their train hosts of inferior intelligences,—swelling with the consciousness of independence and might,—turn away with sullen scorn from a religion, which publishes good tidings to the meek, and which would prostrate at a Saviour's feet all the high powers of the soul, and all its proud imaginations.

Is learning honourable among men? We would not wrest from the scholar one of his hard-earned laurels: we admire his industry; we are thankful for his discoveries; and, if guided by the love of virtue and of truth, we assign to him no ordinary rank among the benefactors of his species.

Let him remember, however, that our applause may be bestowed upon those whom Christ will at last reject; that no mental cultivation can exalt man to a moral union with his Maker; and that he, who distributes gifts as he pleases, may confer on the humble peasant that grace which may be withheld from the wise, the mighty, and the noble. Multitudes who knew only the simple truths of the Bible, have ascended to glory, leaning on the arm of their Redeemer; while thousands, from the very summit of intellectual fame, have plunged into the blackness of darkness for ever.

Is birth an occasion of pride? See, how

> "He pours abundant shame
> On honourable blood."

Not to say, that "the boast of heraldry" is often allied to meanness and vice, which annihilate, in whomsoever they may be found, all claims to respect from men;—not to say, how degenerate and how abject the progeny may be, of ancestors renowned in story;—we well know, from the history of all ages, that the high-born and the noble enjoy no superiority in the kingdom of Messiah. They of the most lowly parentage, may be seen marching upward to the skies, and seizing that crown of glory, which never fades, while among the glittering throng, decked with stars and diadems, few are endued with the magnanimity to trample on terrestrial vanities, and rise, by faith in the Son of God, to the joys of his kingdom.

Do we admire the splendours of wealth and fashion? These imply no title to the peculiar privileges of God's elect. Among those, who ride in pomp and shine in the circles of gayety, would any of us expect to find very frequent examples of evangelical humility, spirituality, and that faith which overcomes the world? Who, in passing through our cities, would think of looking first among the ranks of opulence, and splendour, and fashion, for examples of meek, unpretending, and devoted service in the cause of Jesus Christ? Blessed be God, in the ranks of the rich, there are some, who, like Joseph of Arimathea, have been taught to feel that the noblest use of wealth is its consecration to the honour of Christ; and that no treasure is worthy of being coveted, except such as may survive the ruins of the last conflagration and be carried with us into eternity. But how rare is such magnanimity! "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God. Hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom, which he hath promised to them that love him?"

Do we aspire after rank and office? Well may our ambition be chilled, when we remember the too common character of those, who rise to the highest stations of trust and honour among men. It is not easy to unite the eager pursuit of earthly promotion, with an integrity that never yields to circumstances, and never falters; and it is far more difficult, if not impossible, to associate such a spirit with the unvarnished simplicity and meekness of the gospel. Divine grace has sometimes presented to our view a David, an Hezekiah, or an Alfred, to teach us that no station is above its reach; but to confound the pride of station, it has commonly descended, for its most signal triumphs, into those lowly regions of society, towards which imperial majesty would scarcely deign a look. It has assigned to obscure fishermen and carpenters the privilege of leading

> "on to glorious war,
> The sacramental host of God's elect;"

while senators and kings despise, and wonder, and perish.

Do we applaud the popular virtues—industry, uprightness, generosity, patriotism? It is well. In their connexion with the present life, they cannot be too highly esteemed; and they will exist and flourish wherever the gospel exerts its sanctifying influence on the heart. But, as they may live and shoot forth vigorously, disjoined from the principle of evangelical obedience, so they give no promise of renovating grace; and are not seldom found in combination with that high-minded pride, which, more than any other spirit, breathes hostility to the saintly attributes, exemplified and enforced in the gospel. No wonder then, that the splendid virtue which all unite to admire, should often fail of heaven. So it is; and, on the other hand, not unfrequently men of a character originally little deserving of esteem, are impressed, created anew, and trained up for glory, by the mysterious agency of that Spirit, "who worketh all things after the council of his own will."

And what shall we say of that *decent morality, seriousness, and respect for religious institutions*, which it is the prayer of every good man may become universal? Do they infallibly issue in regeneration,—in real, deep and established piety? Does not the sober man often find quiet in his soberness, the formalist trust to his formality, and the superficial religionist, like multitudes of the ancient Jews, live and die ignorant of the only method by which a sinner can gain forgiveness and the favour of his Maker? The amiable ruler, impressed with the importance of the friendship of God, comes with eager haste, and, falling on his knees, as if wholly intent upon salvation, proposes to Jesus the question, of all others most interesting to man, "What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" He had shunned all the grosser forms of vice and profaneness; and seems to have been adorned with a thousand lovely qualities. But a single proposal for proving his sincerity betrayed the actual state of his heart—his self-indulgence—his supreme devotedness to the world. He "went away grieved." But while men of pharisaical strictness go away and die, rejecting the Saviour; sinners of the most profligate character are, in many instances, arrested, awed, subdued, reformed, and justified, by the power of redeeming grace.

5. *In the means which God employs for the salvation of sinners*, it is evidently his design to abase human pride.

He has commenced a mighty system of grace, the issue of which shall be the complete redemption of a multitude that no man can number, and an inconceivable accession of knowledge, bliss and glory to the holy universe. It might be imagined that, in effecting a purpose so august, he would put in requisition, as the most indispensable means, all that we deem efficient in the ordinary events and revolutions of the moral world; and that on these, he would chiefly rely, in the grand enterprise of reclaiming an apostate race.

To the judicious administration of human government we attach an almost resistless energy; and to the operations of this mighty engine, we should naturally look as the leading power to accomplish that change in the sentiments and character of mankind, which Christianity predicts. Human laws, however, have effected little in the propagation of the pure gospel; and where they have assumed any other authority in favour of religion than that of simple protection, they have in general weakened, by their interference, the cause they were intended to support. Governments themselves *must be reformed*, and present such models of evangelical integrity as they

have rarely exhibited, before they will be prepared to exert any prominent, and ultimately beneficial influence, in direct aid of the gracious designs of the Redeemer. Never have the reality and frequency of his victories been more apparent than when his armies, guided and shielded by his own invincible arm, resisted all the authorities of the Roman empire. And, however we might tremble for the government that should now dare to unsheath its sword against the gospel, we could have no doubt of the ultimate success of the gospel, were it proscribed in the constitution and laws of every nation on earth.

Nor does Christianity obtain its triumphs by philosophy and eloquence. These arts, however important, can accomplish little in reforming the morals; much less in purifying the affections of men, and moulding them into conformity with the spirit of Christ. Sinners never have been, and never will be, subdued to penitence, humility, faith, and obedience, by any fine-spun theories of virtue, however embellished with learning and rhetoric, or by any considerations drawn from present utility, self-esteem, and earthly glory. The reasoning, the declamation, and the persuasion derived from such sources, can have no better influence than to confirm that innate pride in man, which is the grand obstacle to his obedience, while they fix his mind on pursuits, whose highest reward is the approbation of fellow-worms.

The simple doctrines of the cross, united with faith and prayer in the church, are the instruments by which, in spite of all the sneers of infidelity, the great enemy of souls is to be vanquished, and his empire subverted. These are the weapons which ever have been employed in achieving the redemption of sinners. By means of these, the apostles and primitive ministers of Jesus, going forth in the strength of the Holy Spirit, carried their conquests into the very heart of Satan's kingdom, demolishing the strongest bulwarks of prejudice, ignorance, pride, superstition, and idolatry; and bringing into captivity to Christ thousands of thousands who had sustained, unmoved, the combined assaults of the genius, and literature, and taste, and philosophy, of the world. By means of these, far more than by an exposure of the fraud, impurity, and cruelty of the *man of sin*, the reformers undermined his ill-gotten authority, drew forth millions of his slaves to breathe the fresh air of liberty, and imparted to Christian empires an elevation of views, and energy of principle, which will not cease to be remembered and appreciated, till time shall be no more. These despised doctrines have lost none of their efficacy. On them the devoted missionary depends, as the only means which God will bless, to rescue the wretched heathen from the bondage of pollution and shame; and on these he does not depend in vain. The Greenlander, the poor Indian of the western forest, the inhabitants of the isles, and the sable sons of Africa, lift up their voices together, and sing of the wonders accomplished in the name of Jesus, by these calumniated doctrines. In these, as in the cloud of glory, the Angel of the covenant moves on with his church, to enlighten and guide all her journeyings; and from these, as from the same cloud, he pours dismay and terror on her enemies. In every genuine revival of religion, these are the arms with which he smites and conquers; and by these, he will continue to conquer, till earth shall own him Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

6. Of the salvation of the gospel itself, humility is a prominent characteristic.

None can share in the benefits of Christ's redemption, till, condemn-

ing themselves, and renouncing self-righteousness, they are prepared to ascribe the whole praise of their salvation to distinguishing grace; to serve God from pure love and gratitude; and to own for ever, that, in point of personal desert, they can demand nothing better than the full infliction of the punishment denounced against transgressors. Such have been the sentiments and confessions of pious men in every age. "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us; but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake." It has been their delight to solicit favour as a sovereign gift, to sink into their own nothingness, and to exalt, in their affections and songs, the worthy name of Him who is above all blessing and praise. So it is on earth; and so, more eminently and perfectly, it is in heaven. Not an ambitious thought, not one proud or contemptuous emotion, can find entrance there. Heaven indeed has its thrones and its crowns; but they are thrones which none can occupy, crowns which none can wear, save those who willingly refuse all praise to themselves, that it may be given to Jesus, and whose private interests are forgotten, absorbed in the high concerns of his holy kingdom. "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the living creatures, and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing and honour, and glory and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

Thus, in the great salvation of the gospel, the loftiness of man is bowed down, and the haughtiness of men is made low, and the Lord alone is exalted: "that no flesh should glory in his presence."

My brethren, do we not find in this subject *convincing proof of the divine origin of the Gospel?* Men are proud; and they cannot easily conceive of happiness which begins in the prostration of their pride, and rises and expands in the same proportion as they are little and worthless in their own esteem. Hence the religion they would frame, would, without doubt, propose rewards, gratifying to an ambitious, covetous, or sensual heart; and such, we know, has been the actual character of every religion on earth, save that which is taught in the Scriptures. Is it credible, that this religion, which wages war with all man's corruptions, sinks him as a guilty pensioner at the footstool of mercy, and exalts by purifying his nature, had a merely human origin? What mind of man formed so sublime a conception? Surely not one that was depraved; and an upright and pure mind must have abhorred the thought of imposing upon us, as a revelation from God, the offspring of its own fancy. Look through the world—I do not say for a parallel,—but for any thing that approaches to the simplicity, and harmony, and grandeur of design, which pervade the records of the Christian's faith, and signalize the whole history of his religion. And as to the humility of the gospel, opposed as it is to all man's sinful prejudices and hopes, it is plainly the virtue which most of all becomes him; the disposition that suits his helplessness, his guilt, and his misery; that cures his irritability, silences his murmurs, reconciles him to all the duties of benevolence, and prepares him to seek and enjoy his supreme felicity in the government and guidance of his heavenly Father. Aside, then, from miracles,

prophecy, and the concurrent records of nature and time, we behold, in the tendency of the gospel, and its mighty influence on the character and happiness of believers, the infallible marks of its divinity.

We learn moreover from this subject, *the principal reason of the opposition of proud men to the gospel.* It has ever been most hated and resisted by those, whose estimation of their own capacity, acquisitions, and virtues, has been the highest. To the self-righteous Jew, it was a stumbling-block; and to the philosophic Greek, it was foolishness. To men of the same character it is still an offence; and among them we find the leaders in error, the angry disputants of the age, the scoffers at all serious religion, and the cool, contemptuous, and *rational* despisers of Christianity in all its forms. Nor is this wonderful. How could it be otherwise, than that such men should manifest hostility to a religion, which pronounces them incapable of the attainment of happiness, without divine teaching; condemns them as sinners, deserving of eternal wrath; and places them, as dependent beings, on a level with the most ignorant and vile of the human race? To be stripped of all their factitious distinctions—to be treated according to the feelings of their hearts, and their conduct towards the divine Saviour,—no wonder, that, at such a thought, the children of pride feel resentment burning within them. All this, however, proves nothing against the gospel. It only proves the inveteracy of man's moral disease; the completeness of his ruin; the necessity of an influence more than human to purify and save him.

Finally: *Let the ministers of Christ, parents, and all others, who would be instrumental in saving sinners, use, for this purpose, the means which God has appointed and approves.* Let your *manner* bear the impress of a heart, glowing with kindness and affectionate zeal. Let your doctrine drop as the rain, and your speech distil as the dew. Entreat with tears. This is well. But then the *matter*—let *that* be the unadulterated gospel, with all its dreaded, hated, humbling peculiarities, explained, proved, pressed with energy, on the conscience and the heart. Nothing else will be of any avail. You cannot *flatter* down the enmity of a carnal world to holiness and to God. The proud hearts of sinners must be broken, before they will receive with thankfulness the tidings of mercy through a Redeemer; and nothing will break their hearts, but the distinguishing truths of the gospel, clearly understood, and powerfully applied by the Holy Ghost. Seeming conversions, produced by any other means, will disappoint your hopes. They may be combined with strong feeling, but they will be superficial, or transient. They may blaze like a meteor lit up at midnight—to be followed by a thicker darkness. May not the apostacies, so often succeeding revivals of religion, and dishonouring these blessed seasons "of refreshing from the presence of the Lord," be traced, in many instances, to a partial, distorted, or ambiguous exhibition of those doctrines of the cross, which exalt God, and humble the pride of man? Let these then be the great theme of Christian teachers, and of the church, when they would present their mightiest force against the empire of sin, rooted as it is in the prejudices, passions, earthly interests, and multiplied corruptions of mankind. Have nothing to do with a tame, time-serving, compromising Christianity. Wield the sword of the Spirit, naked and burnished in all the dazzling brightness of its terrors, as well as of its mercy; call upon the earth to behold; invoke the heavens to your aid; press onward in the strength of God; till the impassioned inquiry, "*Men and brethren, what must we do?*"—mingled with the shouts of the ransomed, shall break forth from every land, and hamlet, and habitation of man.

SERMON XXXI.

By JOHN WOODBRIDGE, D.D.

GOD'S RESPECT TO THE LOWLY.

PSALM CXXXVIII. 6.—*Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly.*

On a survey of the works of God, as the products of his power and skill, the thought which first impresses us, is that of his unsearchable greatness. All parts of the creation proclaim his glories. The emotions of sublimity, inspired by the wide-spreading forest, the cataract, the mountain rearing its summit to the sky, the blue expanse over our heads, and the mighty wastes and billows of the ocean, can hardly fail to be associated with overwhelming conceptions of his omnipotence and grandeur. These sentiments are heightened in proportion to the extent of our field of vision; and to the most uninstructed mind, a cloudless evening sky presents a scene of wonder, to which all the magnificence of earth is poor. When we contemplate the heavens, by the light of science, as the stupendous array of worlds, and suns, and systems, all moving on, in wondrous harmony, to subserve the will of their Maker,—when, having mused on all that the eye, or the telescope can discover, we still imagine ourselves to be standing at the vestibule of the universe, and conceive of other firmaments, stretching into immensity—to us, insects of an hour, confined to this little planet, the creation itself seems infinite;—how great then is He, who spoke and it was done, who commanded and it stood fast? His resources are neither exhausted, nor diminished; and in a moment he could create a new empire, compared with which, all that now exists should seem as a drop in the bucket, or as dust in the balance. With these views vividly before us, all our conscious importance in the scale of being is lost; man dwindles into a speck, a nothing: and the inquiry will naturally arise, What can be his assurance of the continued care, protection and kindness of his Almighty Creator? By deeper thought, by a more attentive study of his works and word, we learn the consoling truth, that his observation is as minute, as his knowledge is boundless, and his love as tender, as his greatness is incomprehensible. He is the Guardian, the Parent, of the meanest, no less than of the most illustrious of his creatures. The hand, which sustains and moves worlds, supports all, adorns all, blesses all; it paints the tulip and the rose, feeds the ravens, and imparts to the insect that glitters in the sun-beams, its vivacity and gladness. The Mighty God looks from his habitation upon the children of men; "he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust;" but he is peculiarly the Friend, the Protector, the Father of all such, as reverence his name, submit to his authority, and trust in his mercy. "Though the Lord be high, *yet hath he respect unto the lowly.*"

To illustrate, in a number of particulars, the affecting truth taught in this passage, will be my object in the present discourse.

1. *God* hath respect to the *character* of the lowly.

He knows indeed all that vileness, over which they mourn; and, as a God of purity, he must hate sin, in whomsoever it is found. But he witnesses also their ingenuous relentings, their earnest application to him for mercy through the atonement; he sees them retracing their steps, bowing at his throne, and sinking into their proper place, as his creatures, and as sinners. These expressions of a filial spirit he loves; his fatherly heart yearns over the returning prodigals; his paternal arms are extended to embrace them. He views in them his own image restored; he beholds them taking part with himself against a revolted world, and joined in the temper of their hearts to his beloved Son; and he bids them welcome to all the provisions, endearments and joys of his happy family. "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus, Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth. Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord.—Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." "But the proud he knoweth afar off." He sustains them, confers upon them his benefits, requires their obedience and holds them accountable at his bar; but he abhors them still as rebels, whose aims and pursuits break in upon the order of the universe, and tend to dissolve that beautiful harmony, which connects in one grand system of benevolence all the parts of his moral kingdom. He must frown upon men, who, instead of aiming at his glory, that supreme point of attraction in the holy creation, would exalt themselves, by trampling down his authority, and spurning from them the offered grace of the gospel.

2. The Lord hath respect to the *prayers* of the lowly.

When we contemplate God in his majesty, the immensity of his essence, the infinitude of his knowledge, the boundlessness of his power, dwelling in light inaccessible, the universal Creator, the Director of moving worlds, the Life of heaven, before whom bow myriads of angels, celebrating his praises in everlasting songs,—dare we indulge the thought, that prayers, offered to HIM by sinful children of the dust, can be heard and accepted? These suggestions of unbelief, plausible and imposing as they are, spring from our ignorance of God, our low and unworthy conceptions of his tender mercy. Invested in all the glory of his own perfections, he is also the Refuge, the Hope, of his people. Nor are the wise and the great of this world the only men, invited to the exalted privilege of communion with Him who rules over all. Passing by the proud, he receives from the lowly in heart the worship in which he delights. Be they tenants of the cottage or the prison, be they wanderers in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth; it is all one; their sighs of penitence, their confessions, and fervent applications for mercy, are music in his ear. Do they cry to him for knowledge, and lift up their voice for understanding? He regards their cry. Jehovah is their Instructer. His Spirit dissipates from their minds the mists of prejudice, purifies their moral taste, reveals to them, through the medium of sanctified affections, the glory of his word, inspires *them with* a reverence of his authority, and thus prepares them,

with the simplicity of children, to understand and embrace his testimony, on every subject connected with their duty, and their immortal interests. "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.—In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight."—Do they ask for the forgiveness of sin? The gracious Father meets with joy, and adorns with his best robe, and entertains with princely magnificence, his long lost, but now penitent son. The simple petition, issuing from a broken heart—"*God, be merciful to me a sinner*" —ascends to the heaven of heavens, and engages all the energies of infinite love to deliver and bless the most needy and guilty. They are encouraged, in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgivings, to make their requests known to God. He assures them that he is more ready, in answer to their prayers, to bestow upon them the richest spiritual favours, than any human parent can be, to give bread to his hungry children. "I never said to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye my face in vain." O, it would require volumes, more than the world has yet seen, to tell the exploits of humble and earnest prayer. I might refer you for proofs of its efficacy, to all the saints, whose history is recorded by inspiration. I might speak of Jacob. and Moses, and Joshua, and Samuel, and David, and the prophets, and the apostles of the Lamb. I might show you how a spirit of prayer in the church has ever been the harbinger of her emancipation from bondage, or of the enlargement of her territory, or of the overthrow of her enemies. But I forbear. It is the prayer of the lowly only, which so prevails with God. "He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he hath sent empty away. He will regard the prayer of the destitute; he will not despise their prayer."

3. God hath respect to the lowly, in that he *strengthens them, in their spiritual conflicts.*

The scriptures represent the Christian life in language expressive of the most strenuous exertions and the severest toils. It is a race, a wrestling, a fight of faith. The foes of the believer are many and strong, now lurking in ambush, now amusing him with false colours of peace, now circumventing him in silence, now rushing upon him with all their combined force, as armies prepared for battle. The world and the legions of hell continually beset him; they are staunch, irreconcilable enemies; and if they flatter, it is but to deceive, and betray, and destroy. More than all, his peace, usefulness and salvation are endangered by his inbred corruptions, those traitors in his own bosom. Against all these foes, both without and within, he must watch and contend every moment, all his way to the celestial city. Were he to meet them in his own strength, he would fall at the first onset. They have overthrown the mighty; they have carried into captivity, and led down to perdition, multitudes of the honourable of the earth. What then can the feeble saint do in such a conflict? He feels his own insufficiency. He knows, by sorrowful experience, that, when he would do good, evil is present with him; and that his strength is weakness. In vain, does he ask help from creatures. Nature supplies no armory, adapted to his defence, in the hour of assault and peril; the arrows from her quiver fall, imbecile and broken, in the dark affray. He looks upward—a vigilant eye marks all his movements, a cheering voice animates him to the contest, the shield of Omnipotence is spread before him, the sword of the Spirit scatters and subdues his enemies. "This is the victory

that overcometh the world, even our faith." The God that guides the planets, and calls by their names all the hosts of heaven, is on his right hand, and on his left; teaches his hands to war, and his fingers to fight; raises him, when fallen; heals him, when wounded; revives him, when fainting; leads him; carries him forward from conquest to conquest, till his labours are finished, and he triumphs in death. Why should we wonder? Stripped of self-dependence, he rises and prevails in the strength of him who is Almighty. "Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles: they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

4. God hath respect to the *exertions* of the lowly, in the cause of truth and holiness on earth.

Earthly influence, and wisdom, and authority can, of themselves, do nothing, in the high enterprise of enlightening and evangelizing the world. They may be subordinate agents, as are all things else, in fulfilling the designs of heaven towards the church. But the direct means, without which all others would prove ineffectual, or operate against the benevolent counsels of the Redeemer of men, are the prayers, and sacrifices, and faithful labours of the lowly in heart.—Who are they, by whose instrumentality, the gospel, in the days of the apostles, triumphed over the false learning, and boasted eloquence, and deep corruption of the Gentile world? Who raised the standard of the cross in Asia Minor, the cities of Greece, and the remotest regions of the Roman empire, carrying salvation to the cottage and the camp, the haunts of poverty and ignorance, the schools of philosophers, and the palaces of kings? Not the Jewish sanhedrim—not proud Pharisees, trusting to their own righteousness—not the followers of Zeno, or Plato; but a company of humble men, of whom most were unlearned, and all had been taught to count their acquisitions as loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. Who were the individuals, employed by Providence, to shake mystical Babylon to its foundations, and pour the light of day into the dark cells of papal delusion and imposture? They were learned, they were profound, they were indefatigable; but, beyond all this, they had known the plague of their own hearts, and the value of the gospel; they had seen themselves justly exposed to perdition; they had cordially recognised and loved their dependence; they had been driven from every other refuge to the free grace of the Redeemer. Yes, they were men of humility and prayer; and they well knew that the conversion of sinners was to be effected, not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of God. Much has lately been accomplished, in revivals of religion at home, and the enlargement of Messiah's kingdom among the heathen. But what have been the instruments, by which this moral revolution has commenced, and is now advancing towards its consummation, in the overthrow of all idolatry and error, and the universal establishment of the reign of righteousness and peace? Who are they at whose approach the wilderness and solitary places are glad, and the desert rejoices and blossoms as the rose? They are men imbued with that spirit which drew from the apostle of the Gentiles the humble and grateful acknowledgement, "By the grace of God, I am what I am; I laboured more abundantly than

they all; yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me." They are men, who, like Brainerd, mourn over their imperfections, and throw themselves continually upon the resources of all-sufficient grace, rather than indulge self-complacency, in view of their privations, and toils, and sufferings. They abhor the thought of sharing with their Saviour the minutest portion of the glory of his achievements. They would give him all, and lie at his feet, as penitent and thankful petitioners, and recipients of his bounty. O! if there were more of this self-abasing spirit in the church—if the visible friends of Jesus would pray, and weep, and labour, as becomes the redeemed servants of such a Master—a new era would speedily begin; the beauties of holiness would clothe all Christendom, now deformed by ignorance and infidelity, and crime; and the day-star of mercy, with splendour and gladness in its beams, would rise upon all nations.

5. God hath respect to all the *best interests* of the lowly, for time and eternity.

Jehovah has condescended to speak to the sinful, feeble, and dying children of men; and the volume, containing the record of his will, abounds with such glorious promises, as none other than himself could give. And to whom are they addressed? Not one of them is for the proud, however pre-eminent in talents, exalted in station, or illustrious in fame. They are all for men of another character; and to the humble, though despised, or forgotten, or persecuted on earth, belong the immense blessings of that gracious covenant, which is ordered in all things and sure. "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for their's is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth."

The Providence of God illustrates and establishes his word. For the lowly, he governs the world; visits it with sunshine and showers; produces the vicissitudes of the seasons; gives fruitfulness, and plenty, and peace; awakes the elements to fury, and composes them in his mercy; directs in the tempest of insurrection and war; arrests its violence; and kindles on the bosom of the stormy cloud the bow of serenity and promise. He restrains the enemies of his children; and forces the most malignant passions, the darkest designs, and the most untoward events, to contribute to their purification, or more speedy admission to the joys of Paradise.

The Most High ordains, for their greatest good, all the circumstances of their condition in the present world. If they are prosperous, it is that they may be the more grateful; and, by a due employment of their wealth and influence, reap the rewards of an active liberality, as well as promote the knowledge, virtue, and happiness of their species. If they are poor and afflicted, it is for the trial and improvement of their faith; that his grace may be honoured by their patience, and steadfast confidence in his paternal care; that the ties which bind them to earth may be weakened; and their aspirations after the purity and peace of heaven make welcome the hour of their release from the sins and sorrows of mortality. Their health, their estate, their families, all things connected with their enjoyment in the present life, are peculiarly under his guardianship; and not a hair can fall from their heads, but by his appointment. He limits the period of their earthly existence; and mercifully ordains the means and all the circumstances of its termination. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. Surely he shall deliver thee *from the snare* of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall *cover thee with his feathers*, and under his wings shalt thou trust."

For the lowly, he has prepared, beyond "this visible, diurnal sphere," mansions of undecaying beauty, where the fear of death can never enter, and the storms of revolution are unknown; where there is no night, and the glory of God and the Lamb is the light thereof for ever. The grave is the narrow entry to those everlasting abodes. How happy then to die. How happy, to be with Christ, to behold his glory, to fall prostrate in his presence, to exult in his smiles, and join the multitudes of holy beings, from all worlds, in endless ascriptions of praise to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The very bodies of the saints rest in hope. Their full redemption is secured; and, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, the dead shall be raised incorruptible. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." Would we describe?—we cannot even conceive the fulness, the purity, the duration of that bliss, to which the redeemed family will be exalted in the new heavens and the new earth they are destined to inhabit. "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

Since all the blessings of eternity are for the lowly, and for them only, suffer me, my hearers, to ask you, what is your character? Do you trust, for acceptance with God, to the decencies and moralities of your life, or the homage paid to your virtue and usefulness, by the world? "The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost." Do you rely for justification, on any regularity in your devotions, on any assumed sanctity and austerity of manners? The proud and ostentatious Pharisees, whom the merciful Saviour condemned as hypocrites, could boast of greater strictness. Have you seen and lamented the evil of your hearts? In the light of the glory of God, has sin assumed a deformity before unsuspected; all your comeliness within you been turned into corruption; and every plea from the infirmity of your nature, the violence of temptation, and the sincerity of your endeavours been for ever silenced? Have you bowed to his authority with reverence, and awe, and delight? Has the controversy you maintained with his law and government, while his terrors were upon you, been succeeded by a calm acquiescence in his will, and the acceptance of the punishment of your iniquity? Have you felt, do you still feel happy in the thought, that God reigns, that he reigns over you, and that he will so dispose of you, and of all his creatures for ever, as to ensure, in the highest degree, the honour of his own great name?

If you have fallen thus low in your own esteem, you have seen, with new eyes, the wonders and the glories of redemption by the cross; you have clung to it as your last and only security; you have cried for more mercy; you have consecrated yourselves, body and soul, to the service of your divine Deliverer. You pant after perfect conformity to Christ. You live at the throne of grace. All your comforts die, if you neglect prayer. Your self-abasement before God discovers itself in your whole demeanour. There is a *lowliness* in your intercourse with men, an amiable self-distrust, an honouring of others, a readiness to do the most humiliating offices of love; in place of the arrogance, and contempt of others, and odious selfishness, which, however you might have studied to conceal them under the forms of a hollow-hearted civility and gentleness, once marked your character. You have learned to feel for others' woes,—to forgive and to bless even your enemies. There is in true humility, an unaffected sweetness, an angel kindness, of which the boasted politeness of the world is but a heartless imitation.

Whoever you may be to whom this character belongs, the blessings annexed to it are yours. Receive them with gratitude, and employ to purposes worthy of your exalted privileges, the consolations which your Maker gives.

Christian friends, let humility be the beginning and the crown of all your virtues. Let it regulate your zeal, purify your devotions, and give elevation, and dignity, and the hope of success, to all your enterprises. It is this, which renders you amiable in the sight of Heaven, ensures your peace and usefulness, and engages all the perfections of God for your protection, guidance, and ultimate victory over your spiritual enemies. And what inducements to growth in humility are set before you? With all your attainments in holiness, how must you sink into nothing before Him, in whose sight the heavens are not clean? How few and faint the lineaments of your resemblance to the meek and lowly Jesus, your Lord and Saviour? He was all diligence, all love, all zeal, all fidelity. What have you done to prove your title to the character of his disciples? Turn your eyes to inferior examples; to mere men like yourselves,—to Paul, and John, and Brainerd, and a multitude of others, whose whole life was a sacrifice to the glory of their Master, and the interests of his kingdom. What have been your efforts, your toils, your sufferings, your achievements? O that you would feel your deficiencies, and mourn and pray over them, till a new vigour, imparted by almighty grace, should diffuse itself through all your faculties, and impel you to memorable deeds, which should tell on the interests of a world lying in wickedness, and on the destinies of other generations.

Let the worldly, the self-righteous, the proud of every name, learn the littleness, vanity and guilt of all their aspiring pretensions. I might tell you of the unreasonableness of your self-estimation, the obligations you have violated, your moral ruin, your dependence, your frailty, the grave, the worm, the last trumpet, the dread tribunal, the eternal pit of wo; and in view of all these realities, I might surely urge, with appalling emphasis, the doctrine of humility.

Would you be truly *great?* Humility is the true greatness of man, as self-exaltation is his deepest disgrace. It is the greatness of patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and martyrs; allying the child of sinfulness and dust to the ransomed of the Lord in a brighter world; attaching his interests to the honours and kingdom of the great Redeemer; opening to his weeping, ardent eye, the way of access to God the Father. What spectacle so grand as that of the lowly penitent summoning to his succour eternal strength, and, cheered with beams from the Sun of Righteousness, triumphing over all the powers of darkness?

It is a greatness, which no worldly vicissitudes can impair. Fortune, and fame, and all that the ambitious covet, may flee away; he, who exults in prosperity to-day, may be a wretch to-morrow; the heavens, all brightness now, may, anon, be blackened with storms; the fairest hopes may be wrecked in a moment; and despair sit brooding over the ruins of all that the fond heart of man had cherished and idolized. But humility dissolves the charm of earthly attractions; it makes us independent of all below the skies; it fixes our hopes on the undecaying glories of heaven. It never forsakes us. It attends the peasant to his cottage, his frugal table, his homely toils; inspires him with a serenity, which conquerors may sigh after in vain; and raises him to a moral elevation, above the utmost flight of their ambition. It follows to his cell the victim of persecution, and invests him with a grandeur, to which even the imperial purple is beggarly defilement. All other greatness is momentary. But this is durable. It smiles at death; it walks with angels through the dark valley; it reposes on the bosom of Jesus; it will burst the prison of the grave; it will triumph in *immortal* beauty; it will shine with celestial radiance, when stars and suns *are extinguished* for ever.

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Go—Teach all Nations.—Matt. xxviii. 19.

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SERMON XXXII.

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THE MALADY AND PHYSICIAN OF THE SOUL.

Luke, v. 31.—*They that are whole need not a physician.*

The variety of language, by which the knowledge of salvation in Jesus Christ is conveyed to our understanding, is pleasing and wonderful. The pardon of our sins, and justification through his merits, are represented under many metaphors, or images of temporal things, familiar to our minds, and affecting to our hearts. Sometimes we are represented as in bondage, from which the Lord from heaven is offered as our Deliverer. Our natural, sinful state is also compared to sleep, and his voice is heard calling us to awake. At other times we are viewed as dead, *dead in trespasses and sins*, from which deplorable state, his power alone can raise us to spiritual and immortal life. In the text, our moral turpitude is aptly compared to those mortal diseases, which often and painfully afflict our bodies, and eventually destroy our lives. Still Christ is offered as our Saviour; he now appears as a Physician, infinitely skilled, and sent from heaven to our relief. The merits of his blood, and his power to save the soul, are by this figure beautifully illustrated.

In the Gospel history we learn that Matthew, who is also named Levi, soon after he was called to be an apostle of Christ, made him a great feast in his own house, and invited many of the publicans, or tax-gatherers, and others of those whom the Jews called sinners; with whom Jesus sat down to meat. By taking leave of the world in this public manner, Matthew intended, probably, to show, how cheerfully and with what a willing mind he resigned all its gains and its pleasures, for a better kingdom; and to give his friends an opportunity of knowing that Divine Lord to whom his future

hours were to be devoted. He hoped, too, by taking this solemn leave of his former associates, to make some salutary impression upon their minds, and induce them to follow his example. But it had an effect upon the Scribes and Pharisees widely different from his charitable intentions. Ever disposed to justify themselves, and condemn all who differed from them, the pure doctrines of the Saviour had no good effect upon their hearts :—they were engaged rather in observing wherein he departed from their own customs, and of course they censured him for eating and drinking with publicans and sinners.

It was on this occasion that Jesus spake as recorded in our text, and in the corresponding passages of Matthew and Mark. Hearing their censorious observations, he said unto them, *They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. Go ye and learn what that meaneth,—I will have mercy and not sacrifice; for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*

These words were remarkably applicable to the occasion on which he used them. They contain a very delicate, and yet severe reproof of the murmuring Scribes and Pharisees ;—of their self-righteousness, and vain notions of holiness and perfection : and at the same time, they contain a full justification, and more than justification of Jesus' associating with sinners. These words show that he was wise, and good, and merciful. Sinners were the men who needed a Saviour, and whom he came to save. As they only who are sick, have need of a physician ; so they only who are morally depraved, who have done evil in God's sight, and are condemned by his righteous law, have need of some meritorious Intercessor, who can make expiation for their transgressions, and reconcile them to God. To such only, with any propriety, could a Saviour be sent. Supposing that there were among mankind any, such as the Pharisees thought themselves to be, perfectly righteous, with them a Redeemer had no concern. And accordingly our Lord tells them, "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." And while he was occupied in this very charitable office ; while he was taking suitable measures to renovate the hearts of men, and reclaim the wicked from the error of their way ; while he was laying the foundation of his everlasting Gospel, and preparing the way for the salvation of a world, he was certainly acting a part acceptable to that God, who, as the Jews could not deny, had declared by his prophet Hosea, that he *would have mercy and not sacrifice;*—that he was more pleased with deeds of kindness and love, than with such external rites and ceremonial observances as those on which the Jews chiefly founded their claim to perfection.

To those murmuring Jews, and self-righteous Pharisees, who censured their Saviour for associating with publicans and sinners, his words before us had of course particular application. But the very important doctrine

which they so forcibly express, is of general concern, and merits our very serious consideration. The words clearly imply,

THAT MAN IS SPIRITUALLY DISEASED; and THAT HE NEEDS A DIVINE PHYSICIAN.

I. The former of these propositions—*That man is spiritually diseased*—that mankind are all in a state of moral depravity—is a doctrine, humiliating indeed, but exceedingly essential—lying at the foundation of Gospel truth. It would be but wasting words and time to spend them in proving that our Lord intended this as the character of our whole race. When he says the *whole* need not a physician,—and that he came not to call the *righteous* to repentance, he evidently does not mean that any are whole, or perfectly righteous, but the contrary. That "the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth," we are told by him who knows the hearts of all men. He came to call *sinners to repentance;* and we know well that the scriptures "conclude *all under sin*," and that God in his word "calls *all men* every where *to repent*." So full is our Bible of this doctrine,—so evidently and so much are we taught that mankind are by nature in a state unholy,—opposed to moral rectitude, and to the laws and the eternal attributes of the Deity,—that some atonement must be made for sin, and accepted by sinners, before they can be accounted righteous in God's sight, and enjoy immortal blessedness;—so evidently, I say, is this doctrine taught in the holy scriptures, that when I name my subject, it is natural for you to think it unnecessary: it is natural, for you especially who are called Christians, to view it as declaring a self-evident truth; as teaching what every one knows;—as repeating what you already a hundred times have heard. But until we can make men *feel* that they are not whole,—that they are in perishing need of a Divine Physician,—we have done nothing. Even though we induce them to become professors of religion, and receive the sacraments, they will not be truly Christians, nor will their hearts be renewed with holy affections, till they are made sensible of their moral depravity,—sensible that they have no health in them. No man can possibly realize the worth of a Saviour, nor be duly thankful to God for his astonishing mercy in Jesus Christ, till he feels that he is indeed a sinful creature;—that he cannot for any merits of his own be rewarded or received as righteous. When have you known any one to appear deeply interested in the Gospel message; when have you known any one to feel any thing like an ardent gratitude to the Saviour, and to view him as infinitely precious, till he has first felt himself to be a miserable sinner? And, on the other hand, have you ever known one—who felt himself to be justly condemned by the righteous law of God and who became truly and deeply penitent, that did not also rejoice in this Saviour? that did not appear to be sensible that *Jesus is infinitely precious?* No one ever did truly receive and rejoice in the doctrines of Christ, till the Divine Spirit "convinced him of sin, of righteousness, and of

judgment." And it is very remarkable, and it clearly shows the truth and excellence of this doctrine, that no other preaching but this, of Christ crucified for our sins, and offered as the Physician of our souls, has ever had much effect, in awakening souls to repentance, and producing the fruits of a new and holy life. But where the Gospel is preached in its purity, even among the heathen, this pure, heavenly doctrine of a Saviour, "by whose stripes we are *healed*" has, far more than any other, produced conviction, changed the heart, and reformed the life. When a faithful and celebrated minister of Christ, a missionary among "the heathen of the East, was preaching from those impressive words, *The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin*, a Hindoo pilgrim, who had been condemned to travel several hundred miles with spikes in his sandals, to expiate some crime, came, faint and weary, to the spot, and, hearing these blessed words of eternal life, eagerly exclaimed; *That is what I want;* and instantly throwing away his instruments of torture, became the faithful convert of the Redeemer."* Many similar instances have occurred in the course of missionary labours. And it is chiefly by what the wisdom of the world calls "the foolishness of preaching," that we can ever hope to be instrumental in reforming the lives and saving the souls of men.

They that are whole, our Lord declares, *need not a physician*. But of this character is no soul of Adam's race. Our hope is not in justice, but in mercy. And *this faithful saying*, "that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners,"—*is worthy of all acceptation*.

But *worthy* as this is to be received of all men, with many it "is a hard saying," and they have not ears to "hear it." Pride will sooner feel any thing than its own faults or imperfections. When reason is convinced, the heart often remains unconvicted. In very many cases this truth of man's depravity is acknowledged where it is not felt. Though all complain much of human wickedness: though we shudder at the enormous iniquity which prevails in the world: though interest and friendship can scarce inspire us with mutual confidence, and the chief subjects of our tongues and our pens are the failings and the faults of others; still with great difficulty do we realize that we are in the same condemnation.

Divine Providence permitted, that the depravity of man,—his proneness to idolatry and other sins,—should be remarkably and very strikingly exemplified in the conduct of his chosen people Israel, while under His special care and government. Their continual perverseness, disobedience, and rebellion, while the Lord himself was their Protector and their King, demonstrated that the heart of man was radically evil. The history of this extraordinary people is held up as a mirror to the world, that all may see *what manner of men they are*. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh:"

* Chris. Obser. Vol. v. p. 81.

that which flows from a polluted fountain will ever be unclean. What nations or individuals, since the world began, have turned from sin to holiness, and from idols to the true God, without his gracious interposition to convince them of sin, and awaken them to righteousness?

Some have had their minds prejudiced against this doctrine, from the very inconsistent notions which have been advanced on the subject of total depravity. Inferences too have been drawn from this subject, which neither reason nor scripture will justify. But truth is not less certain or less important, because mistaken or misrepresented. It is certain, that we are *totally* destitute of spiritual health: that from nature we inherit no moral excellence: that every passion and every affection of the heart is contaminated by sin; and that every part of our moral nature is corrupt. The best deeds that we perform, without the assistance of God's grace, are imperfect, and "have in them the nature of sin."

A man, to be convinced of this doctrine, need but to observe the state of his affections, and what passes in his own mind. There we find a selfishness inconsistent with the rights of others. There we find propensities repugnant to holiness and purity of heart. There we find a natural aversion to spiritual things,—to the saving doctrines of Jesus Christ. And on the other hand, how natural, how predominant, how ardent, how unconquerable are our affections to the world! The most trivial vanities captivate the soul; while eternal realities are disregarded or despised. Can such a state of mind be a state of health? Can that heart be whole, which is alive to every thing but to HIM who is the life of all things? Can they be whole, who have the least delight in what is most profitable? who give their money for that which is not bread, and labour for that which satisfieth not? who think only of a life which they soon must leave, and disregard that which is everlasting?

Some there are, who pretend to reason against this doctrine, by saying that God would not make a race of beings, and permit his workmanship to be marred, and his creatures to depart from the state of holiness in which he first placed them. But who ever reasoned thus in other cases? Did ever a sick man quiet his fears with such an argument? Does he ever say, that God would not make a body so wonderfully organized, and then permit it to be wasted with disease, and come to dissolution? The same wise Creator, who is the author of your spiritual nature, is also the author of your animal frame. And if he permit the body to sicken and to perish, may he not permit the soul to depart from righteousness and lose its spiritual health? God has in his goodness provided physicians for the body; and you gladly receive their medicine, and avail yourself of their skill and power to heal. Though you know not the reason, nor see the justice of your sickness, you carefully use the means of relief. And why re-

fuse the Physician whom the same God has mercifully provided for your soul, though you cannot see the wisdom or justice of God's permitting sin to enter into the world? Let us leave these deep things with Him who is infinitely wise, and seeth not as man seeth. But let us never refuse to taste the streams of grace, because we cannot fathom the depth of the fountain. What the scriptures say of human depravity, your own eyes may see, and your heart confirm. While the distemper is upon you, in vain do you oppose groundless objections to evident facts. Truth has an appeal to the heart. That man is *not whole*, conscience is made both the witness and the judge.

II. And if we are not whole, that *we need a Physician*, follows of course. Till a leopard can change his spots, and the Ethiopian his skin, no man can of himself become pure and righteous before God. Still less, if less may be, can he make expiation for sin, or be justified by his own works, and for his own deservings. The grand inference is, that the Redeemer must be our Righteousness—that there is no name under heaven, but that of Jesus Christ, by which we can be saved. If we are sinners, we cannot be justified for our own merits, nor can we in our own strength stand before the judgment of God.

The subject shows us the infinite worth of that Saviour whom God has given and accepted. It shows how precious is the name of Jesus, so named by an angel from heaven. It teaches us to rejoice and be exceeding thankful, that "we have an Advocate with the Father:" that he who provides a physician for our weak and decaying bodies, is also merciful to our souls.

And who that hears the tidings of this great mercy, can be so strangely blind, or foolish, as to refuse so great a blessing, so freely offered? Shall we suffer the poison to rage, with the antidote within our reach? Shall we permit this sickness to be unto death, when a sovereign remedy is at hand?

Some there are, who proudly reject this salvation of God, because they cannot fully see and feel its necessity. They spurn from them the greatest of God's mercies,—the richest of his blessings, because he has not given them wisdom equal to his own! They reject what they most need, because the demands of pride are not complied with. Such are those who think themselves whole: who have never felt their sinful, perishing state. But let such, and let all be cautious, how they charge God foolishly. Let them reflect of what "punishment they will be worthy, who have trodden under foot the Son of God, and have counted the blood of the covenant wherewith they were sanctified, (or might be sanctified,) an unholy thing, and have done despite unto the Spirit of grace." Let them remember that "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

In the light of our subject we also discover the reason, why Christ by so many is not received. They think themselves whole: they do not feel and acknowledge their sinfulness. In their conduct, at least, they endeavour to justify themselves, and make God a liar. For what reasonable man, who feels himself to be a sinner against GOD, can hope, without a Saviour? Or who can reasonably believe that Christ will save those who obstinately reject him?—who resist the strivings of the Holy Spirit, and receive God's grace in vain? We should then, and if we are wise, we shall, bring this subject fairly to the test of truth, and know of a certainty, whether we do indeed receive this Divine Physician. And, if he be not received, for what cause do we reject him? "Other foundation can no man lay;" and none can be truly Christians except they build on this;—on an experimental knowledge that "we have no health in us;"—an awakened sense that we need "an Advocate with the Father;" and a thankful acceptance of Jesus Christ, as the propitiation for our sins. The Author of your being now calls upon you, as reasonable creatures, to decide this momentous question, Are you sinners, or are you not? When days, and months, and years are swiftly passing away, and death and judgment are near at hand, are you still confident in your own righteousness? Are you prepared to appear before God's tribunal? Be at least decided. To be halting between two opinions, in such circumstances, is not mere folly; it is *madness*—it is inexpressible *guilt*. Which leads us to remark,

Lastly; Our subject shows the *great sin of unbelief*. So great indeed, that Christ himself has commanded us to preach to every creature, "He that believeth not shall be damned." The sinfulness of unbelief does not consist in a mere dissent of our judgment from certain propositions; but in the repugnance of our hearts to the righteousness of God; the opposition of our feelings to his wisdom, and goodness, and offered mercy. It is setting ourselves against that dispensation, which has for its end the salvation of our own souls. It is cleaving to our sins: it is justifying ourselves, in contradiction to the word of God, and in defiance of his judgment.

"Take heed, then, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God," and rejecting the only Saviour. Take heed "lest ye be found fighting against God." It is a great sin to break God's commandments: it is a far greater to reject his offered mercy. From this far greater sin may we all be preserved; and be kept by the mighty power of God, through faith, unto eternal salvation. AMEN.

SERMON XXXIII.

By ALEXANDER V. GRISWOLD, D.D.

CHRIST THE DIVINE AND ONLY SAVIOUR.

ISAIAH, XLV. 22.—*Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else.*

THESE words are very remarkable; and to all men it must be exceedingly interesting to know, by whom they were uttered, and to whom addressed. An invitation so extensive and so gracious, if from Divine authority, cannot, surely, be disregarded, or lightly esteemed, by any who desire to be saved.

In discoursing upon the subject, I propose to consider, First, *the Person* who thus calls; "Look unto *me*:" Secondly, the *invitation* given; "Look unto me, and *be ye saved*:" Thirdly, *to whom* it is addressed; even to "*all the ends of the earth*:" And lastly, the *reason* assigned, why we should look unto him and be saved; "*For I am God*, and there is none else."

I. To whom, then, are we indebted for such unparalleled mercy? Who is the gracious Benefactor,—the mighty Saviour, that thus invites us? A due attention to the whole chapter, and to the quotations from it found in the New Testament, will make it clear and evident, that the Person who thus calls us to himself as the *only Saviour*, is "Christ the Son of the living God." Throughout the chapter, it is positively declared, and several times repeated, that there is *no Lord* besides him. From this we might justly infer, that Christ is the Person who speaks: for not only is he *Lord*; but this is his most appropriate title: "To us there is *one Lord* Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him." There is no other Being—there is no other Person of the Deity to whom this appellation more justly, or more peculiarly appertains. The Father is Lord, and the Holy Ghost is Lord: but to the Son is *all power* given in heaven and on earth: "He is

Lord of all:" He, "the Lord from heaven," it is, who thus graciously invites us.

In this chapter he declares himself to be our Maker: "I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded." And such, as St. Paul writes to the Hebrews, is the language which God the Father addresses to the Son: "Thou, *Lord*, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands: they shall perish, but thou remainest." For as the same apostle writes to the Philippians, "by him (the Son of God) were all things created, that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities or powers; all things were created by him and for him, and he is before all things, and by him all things consist."

In the verse next before the text, he speaks of himself as the *Prophet*, by whom we know God's will: and this is an office peculiar to Christ. He also declares himself to be the *only Saviour:* so that unless we deny Christ to be a Saviour, we must admit that Christ is the Person here speaking. But we know that Christ is a Saviour, and the only Saviour. He was called *Jesus*, and was "so named of an angel," because he was to "*save* his people from their sins." His, indeed, as St. Peter says, is the only name whereby men must be saved.

That it is the Saviour who here speaks, the text itself implies. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." But "to whom else shall we go," except to him who "has the words of eternal life," even to Jesus Christ? To whom else shall "all the ends of the earth," or any part of its fallen race, *look*, but to him who alone is "the way, the truth, and the life?" He it is, who, being lifted up on the cross, draws all men unto him.

In the twenty-fourth verse we further read, "Surely shall one say, (this shall be the language of believers,) In the Lord have I righteousness and strength." And in what other name have we *righteousness* and *strength*, but in the Lord Jesus Christ? "This is the name whereby he shall be called:" this is an appellation highly descriptive of his nature and office, "*The Lord our Righteousness.*"

The following words conclude the chapter; "In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified and shall glory." But no one shall be *justified*, but in the Lord Jesus: nor will true believers *glory* in any other. "God forbid, (saith an apostle,) that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." The true *Israel* are they who believe in Christ: they only "are counted for the seed."

Twice in the New Testament is a part of the context cited as the words of the Messiah: as having been spoken by the Saviour of the world. First, in the fourteenth chapter to the Romans: where the apostle says, "We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ: for it is *written*, (to wit, here in the verse next following our text,) As I live saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God." And the same apostle says, in his second chapter to the Philippians, "God hath highly exalted him, (Christ Jesus,) and given him a name, which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is *Lord*." Without controversy, therefore, our text is the declaration of our Divine Saviour, that he is God, and that there is none else. And this momentous truth, that Christ is God, or Jehovah, shall, the apostle predicts, hereafter be the confession of all the creatures that he has made. But this homage, thus rendered by all creatures to the Messiah, far from diminishing the honour of the first Person of the Deity, shall be, he adds, "*to the glory of God the Father*." There is no way in which we can more highly honour or please the Father, than by receiving and adoring his only begotten Son, as the Lord our Righteousness, and as the only Saviour. Such then is the Person who invites all mankind to look unto him for salvation, even our "Saviour, who is Christ *the Lord*."

II. We proceed therefore to consider the *invitation* which he gives: "Look unto me, and *be ye saved*." This phraseology is very remarkable: *Look*, and be *saved!* "If, (said the servants of Naaman,) the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather, then, when he saith unto thee, Wash and be clean!" What is there possible to be done, which a wise man would not do to *be saved?* to be delivered from sin and death? Is any thing worthy to be compared with heaven and immortality? Is any labour too great, any sacrifice of temporal pleasures too much, for a pearl of so great price? How wonderfully gracious then is this language of "the Lord from heaven," promising salvation to those who will *look* unto him, the Saviour! And this you well know is the doctrine of his Gospel. This is the same Lord who said, "He that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:" that same Son of God, who came into the world, not to condemn, but to save it: who, in the days of his flesh, "stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. And this he spake of the Spirit, which they who believe on him shall receive." The like of this he had spoken, many centuries before, by this same prophet Isaiah: "Every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat, yea, come buy wine and milk, without money, and without price. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live."

How astonishing was the effect of that brazen serpent which, by Divine direction, Moses lifted up in the wilderness! If they who had received the most deadly wound, *looked* upon it, they were healed. But there is, if possible, more cause for gratitude than for wonder, when we consider, what we are taught, that those things were transacted for our benefit, and "are written for our example," "to bring us to Christ." We are the people so wounded: even by the most venomous and deadly of all serpents, our sins. Christ is the Saviour, shadowed forth in that transaction; He took the form of the sinful creature man, and was raised on the cross for the healing of the nations: he is exalted "to be a light of the Gentiles," and "for salvation unto *the ends* of *the earth*." This he expressly declared in his discourse with Nicodemus: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." This manner of expression, *Look* and *be saved; believe* and you shall be *justified; hear* and your *soul shall live;* is affectingly expressive of that grace and free mercy by which we are saved in Christ. He is truly "the *Author* of eternal life:" for with his own right hand and his holy arm hath he gotten the victory. He has put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; he has subdued our deadly enemies; redeemed us from misery and death; and led captivity captive. As by the offering of himself he delivers us from the punishment of sin; so does he by his Spirit rescue and preserve us from its dominion. He sanctifies the heart; he works in us to will and to do what is pleasing to God; he becomes not only the Author, but also the Finisher of that faith by which we are justified; and helps us to do those good works which shall finally be rewarded in heaven. Whatever a Saviour should do to recover a lost world, Christ has done. We may now draw nigh in full assurance of faith; and if, with a lively trust in him, we look, we shall be saved. The part required of us is to justify God's wisdom in the appointed Ransom, and submit to his righteousness; to lay down the weapons of our hostility; to withdraw from the enemies, who hold our souls in bondage, and to choose the Lord, as the Captain of our salvation. To obtain the victory over sin and death, we are to become soldiers of Christ; to "fight the good fight of faith" under the banner of him who is already victorious.

III. Such is the Saviour who calls us, and such and so free the salvation he offers. And who are the happy people to whom this gracious invitation is addressed? To whom does the Lord say, "Look unto me, and be ye saved?" Even to the whole of the human race. The invitation, is to "*all the ends of the earth*:" which is a well known Scripture phrase, including all the nations and people of this terrestrial world. Christ "tasted death for every man;" and sends his "gospel to every creature" of Adam's fallen race. He would have all men come to the knowledge of the truth, and be saved in him with an everlasting salvation. His language is, Every one

that thirsteth, come to the waters of life. And "the Spirit and the Bride say, Come." Christ, as our Prophet, says this; and "the Spirit of Christ," by whom the prophets spake, and the holy scriptures were written, says the same; and the church too, by her doctrines, her creeds, and her ministers, from the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, calls all men every where to "repent and believe the Gospel;" to look unto Christ and be saved. Yes, "the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely."

When a man is convinced of sin, and first awakened to a sense of his spiritual state of guilt and condemnation; when he reflects on the goodness and other perfections of the Father of mercies; how abundant and unnumbered are the benefits that God daily bestows; and how astonishingly he has "commended his love to us;" and how often and how long he has besought us to turn to him and live; and on the other hand, how insensible we have been to his goodness, how ungrateful for his mercies; how hardened to the voice of warning and of invitation,—despondency is natural. Will the Lord be merciful to one who is so unworthy? Can this heart so prone to sin; so chained to the world, and by nature so opposed to God and his righteousness, be renewed and reconciled through Christ? Is it I who am so lovingly invited to look unto him and be saved? Can I, the most sinful of God's creatures, who for years have trodden under foot the Son of God, and in my conduct counted his sanctifying blood an unholy thing—can I hope, dare I believe, that his call is still to me? Others may be saved; but who has sinned as I have sinned? These mercies are not—they cannot be for me. Such thoughts naturally and often oppress the awakened soul; and bow down the spirits of the humble believer: they almost "quench the smoking flax," and *break* the tender *reed* already *bruised*. But while thus there is life, there is hope; no humble and contrite soul will the Lord despise; none who look unto him with faith, will he reject. To doubt whether you are included in this invitation is to limit the Holy One—to set bounds to his love, and to impeach the veracity of his word. "The promise is to you and to your children, and to them that are afar off."

IV. And to remove all doubts and fears respecting your being included in this gracious invitation to look and be saved, hearken to the *reason* given: "*For I am God*, and there is none else." Were the Person who invites you to look and live, but a fallible creature, a finite being, of limited capacity, you might well distrust his power to effect so great a work. "Thus saith the Lord, Cursed is the man who trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm." But the Person who here invites you is mighty to save; for he is the Omnipotent Jehovah; he is the only *Saviour*, the only *Lord*,

the only *God*. Should the mightiest angel in heaven offer to become your Saviour, and invite you to look unto him for pardon, and peace, and life immortal, well might you doubt, and question his power to save; for "who can *forgive sins* but *God only*." Who can cleanse our soul from the defilement of sin, create us again unto good works, and raise us to life immortal, but that "One Lord, by whom are all things, and we by him?" He, against whom sins are committed, and he only, can remit the penalty. What created being, however high in dignity, would presume to annul the mandates of Omnipotence! to stop the course of divine justice! to say, of his own authority, to him who has sinned against God, "Thy sins are forgiven thee: go in peace:" "look unto me, and be saved!" This is the proper language of "God," and of "none else."

So too, if we are saved, the spirit of our mind must be renewed, and our bodies be raised from the dust, new and glorified, and capable of immortality. And who but God can effect this new creation? Who but God is the resurrection and the life? To renovate the soul, and to raise our bodies from the dust, is evidently as great a work, and requires as great a power, as the first creation.

And further, if we are saved, not only must our sins past be forgiven, and blotted out of all remembrance to our hurt; not only must we be created again in body and soul, before we can be "partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light;" but we must be justified, must be acquitted before God's tribunal, as righteous, through faith in the Saviour. We must be delivered from the guilt of sin, and entitled to the favour of God. And to effect this, the Saviour must fulfil all righteousness on our behalf. "God made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." And this none but a divine Saviour can effect. No mere creature can perform more than the duty which he owes to God: he cannot merit for another; much less for a whole race of beings. We cannot, then, be justified by faith in any mediator but Immanuel, "the Lord from heaven;" he only can be "our righteousness." He is God, and he alone can forgive sin, cleanse the soul from its pollution, and merit on our behalf.

Some have thought that the Saviour is called God and Lord, in a lower and subordinate sense, as though there were truly "Gods many and Lords many." But observe with what wisdom and care, and how decidedly, the Holy One of Israel has precluded such error. Several times in this chapter, he declares himself the *only* God. Others may talk of *Gods many* and *Lords many*: we preach to you a Saviour who is God, and there is none else; no God, no Jehovah, no Lord besides him. To worship or to acknowledge any other Saviour would be idolatrous. This is noticed in the words

immediately before our text: "They have no knowledge, (no right understanding of true religion;) that set up the word of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save. Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: *Who hath declared this from ancient time?* Have not I, *the Lord?* and there is *no God else* besides me: a just God and a *Saviour*, there is none besides me." In this chapter, by his prophet Isaiah, he repeatedly declares, what his apostles John and Paul so fully confirm, that "all things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made, which was made." He it was, our Saviour and Prophet, who called Cyrus by his name more than a hundred years before his birth, and foretold of him what we read in this chapter. In the words following our text, which, as St. Paul shows, were spoken by Christ, he *has sworn by himself;* which would be the greatest idolatry, were he not the true God; and he declares by this tremendous oath, that all creatures ought to worship him, and to swear by his name: "I have sworn by myself; and the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall swear."

It is also necessary, as was observed, that a Saviour, to be effectually such, should merit on our behalf; and it is noticed in this same passage, that this Lord is such a Saviour: it is here foretold that the language of his people would be, "In the Lord have I *righteousness* and *strength*." And it is declared, that "to him shall man come;" and that "in him (the Lord,) shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory." Here, in four short verses, the last of this chapter, we have comprised what is most essential in Christian theology. This Saviour is the *one Lord*, who claims universal adoration: he is *our righteousness*, cleansing us from sin, and meriting on our behalf. He is *our strength;* his Spirit works in us to will and to do; so that we are "*strong in the Lord*, and in the power of *his might*." To him *men come:* being raised upon the cross, he "draws all men unto him." "All who are incensed against him, (as many in this world are,) shall (eventually) be ashamed." In this Lord shall *all the seed of Israel be justified.* They who have the faith of Abraham are counted for his seed, and are the true Israel of God; and they are justified with faithful Abraham. And they *glory in the Lord:* their language is, "God forbid that I should glory in any other."

Thus you see, how important and how very encouraging is this part of our text: this animating and most astonishing reason why you should look to this Lord, and to him only, for salvation: because he is "GOD:" because "there is none else,"—no other being in the universe—no other name given under heaven, whereby you can be saved.

The improvement from this subject—the effect it should produce upon

our heart and life—is sufficiently obvious. For if we have such a Saviour, who so graciously invites all to look unto him, how great must be the folly of neglecting so great a salvation; how unpardonable the sin of rejecting this counsel of God. Being a divine Saviour, he is omnipotent and infinitely meritorious. Is not he able to save, who is the only Lord, and besides whom there is no other God? Cannot he forgive sin, against whom sin is committed? Cannot he who formed you of the dust, breathed into your body the breath of life, and made you a living soul, renew your heart? Cannot he raise you from the dead, who is himself the resurrection and the life? Through him, who is "Jehovah, our righteousness," we may surely be justified: he, who, "being in the form of God," condescended to assume our nature, and suffer and die for our sins; who had power not only to lay down his life, but to take it again; who rose from the dead for our justification, is certainly an all-sufficient Saviour. He who ascended into heaven to prepare us mansions of bliss; he who sent "the eternal Spirit" to aid us in doing the will of God; and now sits, our Advocate with the Father, at the right hand of the Majesty on high, must be able and willing to save to the uttermost. Hearken then to his Gospel; receive his truth, and "your soul shall live."

But reflect on the hazard of *neglecting* this great salvation. How solemn is that oath, that he will rule the world as its King. Because he could swear by no greater, he has sworn by himself; the word has gone out of his mouth in righteousness, that all shall bow and do him homage. He must reign as Messiah; and in his mediatorial kingdom he will reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. Will you, then, be subdued now by his love, or hereafter by his vengeance? Will you now, in a time accepted, submit to his righteous sway; or be among the last enemies that shall be destroyed?

How great a mercy to the wounded Israelites was that healing image which Moses lifted up to their view! "If a serpent had bitten any man," if he felt the deadly poison stealing along his veins and congealing the streams of life, we may easily conceive the eagerness with which he raised his eye to the sovereign antidote. He would have deemed it madness to delay his application to this unfailing remedy. But how much greater the folly of neglecting to look unto Jesus! of disregarding this his gracious invitation! The venom of sin pervades your whole moral system: it is a sickness which is unto death, not temporal only, but eternal. But here is an almighty Physician: if he but speak the word you are made whole. For this purpose has he been lifted up, that he may draw all men unto him. And to you has the word of his salvation come. O, then, be not like "the deaf adder, that stoppeth her ear; which refuseth to hear the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely." No music can be more charming to

a hearing ear, than that of the gospel trumpet: no one ever charmed more *wisely* than he who speaks from Calvary, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, for I am God." "*Let the wicked, then, forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*"

"To look to Jesus as he rose,
Confirms my faith, disarms my foes;
Satan I shame and overcome,
By pointing to my Saviour's tomb.

Exalted on his glorious throne,
I see him make my cause his own;
Then all my anxious cares subside,
For Jesus lives, and will provide.

I see him look with pity down,
And hold in view the conqu'ror's crown;
If press'd with griefs and cares before,
My soul revives, nor asks for more.

By faith I see the hour at hand,
When in his presence I shall stand;
Then it will be my endless bliss,
To see him where, and as he is."

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Go—Teach all Nations.—Matt. xxviii. 19.

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SERMON XXXIV.

By BENNET TYLER, D.D.
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FREE SALVATION.

Rev. xxii. 17.—*Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.*

That we may duly estimate the value of this invitation, let us consider, in the first place, by whom it is made. This is ascertained, by adverting to the preceding verse. *I, Jesus, have sent mine angel, to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.* We here learn, that this invitation is made by the Lord Jesus Christ; a Being, in whom the fullest confidence may be reposed. He is able to bestow the blessings which he offers, and he never tantalizes his creatures with insincere invitations.

Let us consider, in the next place, the blessing offered:—*The water of life.* Not that water, of which if a man drink, he shall thirst again; but that *living water*, of which if a man drink, he shall *never* thirst; but *it shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life.* This figurative language was designed to express all that is included in the term *salvation*:—pardon, sanctification, adoption, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, in the present life; and glory immortal beyond the grave.

The value of this invitation will be still more strikingly apparent, if we consider, in the third place, the extent of it. *Whosoever will*—whether he be Jew or Gentile, bond or free, old or young, rich or poor; or whatever may be his character—*Whosoever will, let him take the water of life.* Where then is the individual, who can say, that this invitation was not addressed to him?

But once more: Observe the terms on which the blessing is offered. *Freely.* No recompense is demanded. *To the poor the gospel is preached.* All the blessings of religion in this life, and all that heaven contains, are gifts of grace. *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money, and without price. The Spirit and the bride say, come; and let him that heareth, say, come; and let him that is athirst, come; and* WHOSOEVER WILL, LET HIM TAKE THE WATER OF LIFE FREELY. Could Infinite Mercy stoop lower than this? Could guilty man desire to treat with his offended God on better terms?

The doctrine clearly revealed in this passage of scripture, is, *that all men may be saved if they will*: in other words, *there is nothing to hinder the salvation of any man, but his own will.*

I am aware, that sinners often imagine, that there are serious obstacles in the way of their salvation; and obstacles altogether different from the one here supposed. It may be useful, therefore, to spend a few moments in examining some of these supposed obstacles.

1. The *divine law* may be supposed by some, to stand in the way of their salvation. This, indeed, would have presented an insuperable obstacle, had no atonement been provided. Like the flaming sword, which guarded the tree of life, it would for ever have barred the gates of paradise against apostate man. But have you not heard the glad tidings of the gospel? Why did the Son of God come down from heaven? Was it not to honour the law which man had broken, and to prepare the way for the consistent exercise of mercy? Have you never read, that *what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit?* and that *Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth?* What though Sinai utters its thunders:—what though the law proclaims, *The soul that sinneth, it shall die;* and *cursed is every one, that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them*:—THERE IS NO CONDEMNATION TO THEM THAT ARE IN CHRIST JESUS.

2. Some may perhaps imagine, that the *greatness of their sins* renders their salvation impossible. But can you set any bounds to the mercy of God? Is not the blood of Christ sufficient to cleanse from *all sin?* Are your sins great? There is a great and glorious Saviour. *Who is this, that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah; this, that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength?* I THAT SPEAK IN RIGHTEOUSNESS, MIGHTY TO SAVE. *Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world.* Are your sins great?

——————"They don't surpass.
The power and glory of his grace."

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he WILL HAVE MERCY UPON HIM, *and to our God, and he* WILL ABUNDANTLY PARDON. *Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; and though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.*

3. Several *doctrines of the gospel*, have been regarded by some, as presenting insuperable obstacles to their salvation.

The doctrine of *Human Depravity*, has been thus regarded. If I am *entirely depraved*, the sinner sometimes says, then I am utterly helpless. It is beyond my power to do any thing which God requires; and, consequently, it is totally impossible that I should comply with the terms of salvation revealed in the gospel. This representation proceeds upon an entire misapprehension as to the nature of depravity. Depravity does not destroy moral agency. It does not so impair the natural faculties of man, as to disable him from doing his duty, if he will. It has its seat in the heart, and consists in a perverse and sinful inclination. When we say, that man is entirely depraved, we do not mean, that he is a poor, unfortunate being, who is commanded

to do impossibilities; but we mean, that he is a guilty rebel, who voluntarily refuses to yield allegiance to the God who made him. We mean, that he loves sin, and is unwilling to abandon it; that he hates his duty, and is unwilling to perform it; that he dislikes the terms of salvation, and is unwilling to comply with them. We do not mean, that all the powers and faculties of his soul, are so impaired, that he *could not* do his duty if he *would;* but we mean, that he *will not* do his duty when he *can*—that in the full possession of all the powers of moral agency, and with perfect ability to comply with the terms of salvation, if he will, he *chooses* the road that leads to death, and *will not come to Christ that he might have life.* This supposes no difficulty in the way of his salvation, except what lies in a perverse and obstinate will.

Again: The doctrine of *Regeneration*, is supposed to imply an insuperable obstacle in the way of the sinner's salvation. We often hear the sinner reasoning thus—"If I must be born again, in order to enter into the kingdom of God; and if this change is exclusively the work of the Holy Spirit; a work which he is under no obligations to perform, and which my own efforts will never accomplish; then, there is a difficulty in the way of my salvation, which it is beyond my power to remove. It does not depend on my will, but on the will of God, whether I shall be saved." But here, again, the sinner labours under an entire misapprehension, as to the nature of the change in question, and as to the reason why this change is necessary. What is it to be born again? Simply, to be *made willing* to do what God requires. It is thus represented in the scriptures, *Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.* Why is it necessary, that men should be born again? Not because they are *unable* to do their duty, if they will; but because they are *unwilling* to do it. It is their *depravity* which renders this supernatural change necessary. But their depravity is not their calamity merely, but their *crime.* It consists, as we have seen, in a perverse inclination; in a voluntary and obstinate refusal to yield obedience to the reasonable commands of Jehovah. What the sinner needs, therefore, is to have this perverse inclination changed; that is, to be made *willing* to do what God requires. The necessity of this change, therefore, supposes no obstacle in the way of his salvation, except *his own unwillingness* to do his duty.

To make the point perfectly plain, I will illustrate it by an example. The prodigal son left the house of his father, and wasted his substance in riotous living. When he had spent all, he began to be in want. In these circumstances, what ought he to have done? Ought he not to have returned immediately to his father, with penitent confession of his guilt? And had he chosen to have done so, might he not have executed his purpose? Was there any thing to hinder his return? Had he lost his free agency? Had his limbs become palsied? Was any obstacle thrown in his way? No: but he was unwilling to return. His proud heart could not brook the thought of taking such a humiliating step. Rather than go home, and acknowledge his fault, he chose to submit to the most menial employment, and to attempt to satisfy his hunger with the food of swine. But *when he came to himself;* that is, when his heart was changed—*he said, How many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare*, and

I perish with hunger. I will arise and go to my father. He was now *willing* to return. He was before *unwilling;* and hence we see wherein consisted the change in his regeneration. So in every other case. Every sinner is capable of obeying the gospel. There is nothing to hinder his obedience, but his own unwillingness; and consequently there is no other obstacle in the way of his salvation. But his proud heart will not submit. He cleaves to his rebellion, and will not give up the controversy. Rather than comply with the humbling terms of the gospel, he will shut his eyes to every danger, resist every warning, and rush with presumptuous boldness, *on the thick bosses of the Almighty's buckler.* This is the reason, and the only reason, that *except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*

Again: The doctrine of *Election*, is supposed by many to imply an insuperable obstacle in the way of their salvation. But this doctrine, like the others which have been named, is often entirely misunderstood; and the consequences, which it has been supposed to involve, have been deduced, not from the doctrine, as taught in the scriptures; but from the erroneous and distorted views which have been given of it, by its opposers. What is the doctrine of election? It is simply this: That God has determined to make some of the human race *willing* to embrace the gospel. This, you will at once perceive, supposes no obstacle in the sinner's way to heaven, but his own will. The doctrine of election rests on the same foundation as the doctrine of regeneration. Regeneration, indeed, is election carried into effect. What God decreed in election, in regeneration he executes; and if the doctrine of regeneration implies no obstacle in the way of the sinner's salvation, except what lies in his own will, the doctrine of election, implies no other obstacle.

Many, however, seem to suppose, that if this doctrine be true, a part of the human race are bound over to irrevocable ruin, without any power of helping themselves. Hence the excuse, which is so often in the mouth of the profane and the stupid sinner; "If I am elected, I shall be saved, do what I will; and if I am not elected, I shall not be saved, do what I can." A more gross and palpable perversion of the doctrine, could not be invented; and the declaration is as absurd, as if I were to say, "If I am to live another year, I shall, even if I should die to-morrow." The doctrine of election binds no man over to perdition. It throws no obstacles in the way of any man's salvation. It hinders no man from coming to Christ, who is willing to come; or from taking the water of life freely.

To make the matter plain, let us suppose for a moment, that the doctrine is not true. We will suppose, what those who deny the doctrine will be willing to grant; that mankind are free agents, that an atonement has been provided, and that salvation is freely offered to all. But we will suppose, that God has not determined to make any of the human race willing to comply with the terms of salvation; but has left this point to be decided by each individual for himself. If this were the real state of the case, it will be easily seen by all, that there would be no obstacle in the way of any man's salvation but his own will. Now, what alteration in the circumstances of mankind, does the doctrine of election make? It renders it

certain, that some will comply with the terms of salvation. With regard to the rest, it does not affect their situation at all. Their condition is the same that it would have been, if there had been no decree of election. They are still free agents—an atonement has been made—salvation is freely offered—*the Spirit and the bride, say, come*—the door of heaven stands open, and they may all enter, if they will. There is nothing to exclude them from the celestial paradise, but their own voluntary obstinacy. The doctrine of election, therefore, alters the condition of no man for the *worse*, although it alters the condition of many for the *better*. It is simply an exhibition of mercy. "'Twas mercy filled the throne," when the purpose of election was conceived. Why, then, is this doctrine viewed with such terror and alarm? Why does it awaken such enmity in the sinner's bosom, and sometimes fill him even with horror? Is it a dreadful thought, that God has looked with an eye of mercy on this apostate world, and that when he saw the whole human race plunging into irrevocable ruin, he determined to rescue some, and make them trophies of his redeeming grace? Is it a dreadful thought, that God has rendered it certain, that some of our wretched, guilty race, shall ascend to the mansions of the blessed, and join the society of Cherubim and Seraphim? Shall his holy name be blasphemed for this wondrous display of his love and mercy? Does this doctrine trouble you, my hearers? Of what are you afraid? Are you afraid that your names are in the book of life? If not, there is nothing in this doctrine, which need awaken your fears; for if you are not elected, your condition is certainly no worse than it would be if the doctrine were not true. If it has altered your circumstances at all, it has altered them for the better. If it has not rendered your salvation certain, you are just where you would have been, and where all would have been, had no decree of election ever existed.

But there is another doctrine, which it may be thought cannot be so explained as not to imply an insuperable obstacle in the way of man's salvation. The doctrine to which I allude, is the doctrine of *Reprobation*. But what are we to understand by this doctrine? Not that a part of mankind are doomed to hopeless misery, without respect to character, and without enjoying an opportunity to secure eternal life; but simply, that God has determined *to leave a part of mankind to their own choice*. He has determined not to exert his power in subduing their hearts, and making them willing to come to Christ, but to suffer them to take the course which they naturally choose. In short, according to this doctrine, God has reprobated a part of the human race, in the same sense, in which those who deny election, suppose he has reprobated the whole: that is, he has determined to leave them to themselves. There is no reprobation taught in the scriptures, which destroys human liberty, or which impairs the sinner's natural power. Every man is a free, moral agent. Life and death are set before him, and he is capable of choosing between them. There is no reprobation which limits the offers of mercy, or which bars the gates of heaven against any man, who is disposed to enter. Reprobation, therefore, implies no obstacle in the way of man's salvation, but the one which has been supposed.

That this point may appear perfectly plain, let me appeal directly to the consciences of impenitent hearers. Why have you lived to this day without

hope, and without God in the world? Can you lay your hands on your hearts, and look up to heaven, and say, that the fault is in God? Do you feel that you have been bound hand and foot in adamantine chains of God's decrees? Has God compelled you to sin, or restrained you from obeying his commands? Has he hedged up the path of life, that you could not walk in it, if you chose? Have you done your utmost to obtain eternal life, and found obstacles in your way, which you could not surmount? Or are you not conscious, that the fault is entirely your own? Do you not know, that you are free moral agents; that you have walked in the way of *your own hearts;* that you have chosen the course of disobedience; that you have voluntarily listened to temptation, and turned a deaf ear to the voice of conscience, and the voice of God? Are you not conscious, that you might long since have broken off your sins by righteousness, and submitted to God? Have you not voluntarily postponed repentance from week to week, and from year to year? Have you not put far off the evil day, and flattered yourselves with the prospect of a more convenient season? Have you not, again, and again, resolved to venture on, a little farther, in the way to ruin, presuming that you should retrace your steps before the season of probation closed?

Now, if you are reprobated, you will continue to pursue the same course, which you have hitherto pursued. God will throw no obstacles in the way of your salvation. He never has compelled you to sin, and he never will compel you. He will lay you under no restraint. He will leave you in the full possession of your moral freedom, with perfect liberty to obey the gospel, and to make sure of the eternal reward. So long as the season of your probation shall continue, salvation will be within your reach. Life and death will still be set before you. The sounds of mercy will still light on your ears. *Wisdom* will continue *to cry without*, and to *utter her voice in the streets*. The door of heaven will still stand open. The sceptre of mercy will still be extended. *The Spirit and the bride*, will still *say, come;* and a voice from heaven will continue to cry, *Look unto me and be ye saved.* But you will continue to stop your ears to every kind invitation, and will not *listen to the voice of the charmer, charming never so wisely.* When God calls, you will continue to refuse; when he stretches out his hand, you will continue to disregard it. When the Holy Spirit strives, you will continue to resist. You will still presume on future days, and put death and judgment at a distance. You will still plead for a little longer indulgence in sin, and continue to cry, *Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep.* You will continue to be fascinated with the prospect of a more convenient season; and you will follow it, and follow it, while, like an ignis fatuus, it will constantly recede from you; till you drop into your graves, and lose sight of it for ever. Thus it is that the reprobate go down to perdition. And when they shall lift up their eyes in torment, and look back to that season of probation, which has closed for ever; they will feel that their ruin is the fruit of their own folly—of their own *guilt.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. *How easy* are the terms of salvation. Let me request you, my hearers,

when you retire from this place, to take your Bibles and read the words of the text. Read them candidly, and attentively; and ask yourselves, whether salvation could have been offered to guilty man on easier or more reasonable terms. If you were about to provide a rich entertainment, and wished to invite all your acquaintance to come and partake; could you form an invitation more general, more full, and more free, than the one contained in the text? And are you dissatisfied with the terms of salvation? What alteration could you wish to have made in them? Look at this invitation of Christ, and see if you can suggest any alteration that would render it more favourable; that would make it more expressive of his willingness to save you; or that would render the terms of pardon more easy. Salvation is here offered to you *freely*. You are invited to accept it as a gift. No recompense is demanded. God asks you not to make atonement for your sins. He asks you not to submit to any grievous austerities, or to perform any tedious pilgrimage, to purchase his favour. He asks you not to *ascend to heaven, to bring Christ down from above;* or to *descend into the deep, to bring him up from the dead.* No; *the word is nigh you, even in your mouth and in your heart. If you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God hath raised him from the dead, you shall be saved.* Salvation is brought to your door; and it is not only offered to your acceptance, but it is urged upon you by all the motives which the universe can furnish, and with all the powers of persuasion which God can use. What more could God do for you, than he has done? What more could you wish him to do? Do you wish to be saved against your will? What! choose to be saved against your choice! This is a contradiction. Do you wish to *purchase* salvation? This you cannot do. You have already contracted a debt which subjects you to everlasting imprisonment; and you cannot discharge one iota of this debt. How then can you purchase eternal life? But the blessing has been purchased. The ransom has been paid. The blood of the Son of God has been shed. And now this salvation, bought with blood, is freely offered to a guilty world; and *whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.*

2. How great the delusion of those impenitent sinners, who flatter themselves, that they should be glad to be Christians, if they could. If it be true, that nothing but their own *unwillingness* prevents them from becoming the disciples of Christ; then it cannot be true, that they really desire to be Christians: for if this were their desire, they would not continue impenitent. There is certainly an *unwillingness* somewhere; and it must be either on the part of the sinner, or on the part of God. The reason that the sinner is not a saint, is either, that he is unwilling to be one, or, that God is unwilling that he should be one. We cannot make a third supposition. But God has sworn by his own life, that the unwillingness is not on his part: —As I LIVE, SAITH THE LORD GOD, I HAVE NO PLEASURE IN THE DEATH OF THE WICKED, BUT THAT HE TURN AND LIVE. TURN YE, TURN YE, FOR WHY WILL YE DIE. And in the text, WHOSOEVER WILL, LET HIM TAKE THE WATER OF LIFE FREELY.

I am aware, that sinners often really believe, that they desire to be Chris-

tians. But they deceive themselves; and I will endeavour to explain the ground of their delusion. They doubtless desire to escape future punishment, and to be made eternally happy; and as they are convinced that religion is necessary to the attainment of future happiness, they flatter themselves that they desire to possess it. But observe—religion itself is not the object of their desire; but its future rewards. The drunkard may sincerely desire the blessing of temperance, while he has no desire to abandon his cups. So sinners may desire the rewards of piety, while they have no desire for piety itself. They see no beauty in holiness. It is the object of their aversion; and all their desire for it, is like the desire of a sick man for a loathsome medicine, which, he knows, he must take, or die. Do any of you, my hearers, flatter yourselves that you desire to be Christians?—Have you seriously thought, what it is to be a Christian? The Christian hates sin, and loves holiness. He hungers and thirsts after *righteousness*. He delights in the service of God. It is his meat and drink to do the will of his heavenly Father. Do you desire to possess such a character? No man truly desires to be a Christian, who is not willing to forsake his sins, and to walk in newness of life. Are you willing to do this? Call up to view the sins which you habitually indulge. Are you willing to forsake them? If you are, you will forsake them immediately. Look at the duties of religion. Are you willing to perform them? If you are, you will commence a life of obedience without delay. If you are not willing to do these things, you are not willing to be Christians; for these things are essential to the Christian character. Cast away, then, this vain delusion. Be willing to see your own hearts, and to acknowledge your true character. No longer attempt to exculpate yourselves, and to impute unrighteousness to Jehovah When you say, that you should be glad to be Christians, if you could, you virtually say, that it is not your fault that you remain in impenitence. And whose fault is it, my hearers? It is either your fault or the fault of God. While therefore you exculpate yourselves, you cast all the blame of your impenitence upon your Maker. And is not this impiety?

3. How utterly inexcusable are those who reject the gospel. If there is nothing but their own unwillingness to prevent them from receiving pardon, what excuse can they plead in their justification? There is one excuse, however, which the sinner sometimes pleads, when the subject is thus presented, which it may be important to notice. He says, Granting it to be so—granting that there is nothing but my own unwillingness to prevent me from complying with the terms of salvation: still, I cannot change my own will, and if God does not make me willing, how can I be culpable? When the sinner pleads this excuse, he always takes it for granted, that he really desires to change his own will; that is, that he really has a *will*, to have a different *will* from that which he has: in other words, that he really chooses to choose differently from what he actually does choose. But is not this absurd? The truth is, the sinner has no desire to change his will; for such a desire would itself be a change of the will. He chooses not to come to Christ: and while he thus chooses, he has no desire to choose *otherwise*; for he may as well choose to come to Christ, as to desire to *make such* a choice.

But the sinner goes farther. He says, If God does not change my will, how can I be blameable? That is, it is my fixed purpose to persist in rebellion against Heaven; and if God does not stop me in my career, and change my purpose, how can he consistently blame me? If this excuse is valid, it will annihilate at once all the sin in the universe. But let us put this excuse to the test. A man refuses to pay his honest debts, and says, I am unwilling to pay, and if God does not change my will, how can I be blamed? A child refuses to obey his parent, and says, I am unwilling to obey, and if God does not change my will, how can I be blamed? A drunkard refuses to abandon his cups, and says, I am unwilling to abandon them, and if God does not change my will, how can I be blamed? A man murders his neighbour, and says, I had an inclination to murder him, and as God did not change my will, how can I be blamed? Are these pleas valid? Are they not impious? Will they be admitted at the bar of conscience? If not, neither will the sinner's plea be admitted at the bar of God.

And what excuse have you, my fellow-sinners, which you will dare plead at the judgment seat of Christ? What can you say, when God shall deal with you? Will you not be speechless? If you persist in unbelief, will not the throne of God be guiltless in your condemnation? If a man, who has reduced himself to beggary by his vices, now spurns from him the hand that offers to feed him; whose fault is it, if he perish with hunger? If a criminal who is justly sentenced to death, refuses a pardon which is freely offered him, whose fault is it, if he is executed? If a prisoner refuses to leave his dungeon, when the doors are thrown open, and he is offered his liberty, whose fault is it, if he perish in his dungeon? And if sinners who have deserved eternal banishment from God, now *despise the riches of his goodness*, and set at nought the blood-bought salvation, which he freely offers them, whose fault will it be, if they perish? Fellow-sinner, are you slumbering in impenitence? Do you know that you are slumbering on the verge of eternity? Do you know that there is but a step between you and death? Do you know that the momentous question is soon to be decided, whether you are to be saved or lost? Awake, I beseech you, from this guilty repose! Look around you, and survey your prospects. Think of your condition. Think what God has done for you. Think how long you have abused his mercy, and wearied his patience. Look forward to the judgment, and to that state of retribution to which you are hastening. How must you feel, if you should lift up your eyes in torment, and see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, and all the saints rejoicing in the paradise above? All this glory, you may then say, I have lost by my own folly. Once it was offered to me, but I despised it, and spurned it from me; and now I must eat of the fruit of my own way, and be filled with my own devices. O, for another season of probation! But it is too late. My day of grace is past. Heaven is lost—lost for ever.

My hearers, it is not yet too late to secure eternal life. There is yet a mercy-seat. God is still waiting to be gracious. *The Spirit and the bride* still *say, come; and let him that heareth, say, come; and let him that is athirst, come; and* WHOSOEVER WILL, LET HIM TAKE THE WATER OF LIFE FREELY.

SERMON XXXV.

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SOVEREIGN GRACE.

ROMANS IX. 21.—*Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?*

THESE words are used by the Apostle to illustrate and defend God's absolute sovereignty in his dealings with mankind. The argument is this: If the potter, who forms vessels of clay, has power to make of the same lump one vessel for a *more*, and another for a *less* honourable use, according to his own discretion; then, surely, God, the Proprietor of all things, has the same power over the fallen race of men, who were formed of the dust of the earth. He has a right to exercise his own discretion in raising what part of the human race he sees fit to the honours and privileges of the gospel; and, out of the same corrupt mass of mankind, to form whom he will for glory, and leave whom he will to pursue their chosen way of disobedience. That this is the reasoning of the apostle, is evident from the verses which immediately follow. There God is said to have "endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; and made known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had before prepared unto glory." A word is used in the original, which signifies, that the vessels of wrath *fitted themselves* for destruction. This they did by their obstinacy in sin. But with respect to the vessels of mercy, it is written, that *God prepared them unto glory.* Out of the great mass of mankind, universally corrupted and ruined by sin, God, in his infinite mercy, by the energies of his Holy Spirit attending the gospel, sanctifies and prepares a people for heaven. In this work of grace, he exercises his sovereign power in selecting what portion of the deformed mass he pleases, no less than the potter does in forming his vessels of clay.

That God does exercise a sovereign pleasure in converting and saving sinners, cannot escape the notice of any, who attentively read the scriptures of truth. He said to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." Accordingly, God had mercy upon Jacob in distinction from Esau, no less than upon his posterity in distinction from all other nations. Among his descendants were many pious men, in consequence of their special privileges accompanied with the Holy Spirit; while all other nations remained in ignorance and sin.

In view of Pharaoh's hardness under divine rebukes, St. Paul observes, "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth;" or leaveth without mercy, giving them up to their own wilful hardness of heart. He expresses the same sentiment, when speaking of *the vessels* of wrath, who under God's patience fitted themselves for de-

struction, and the vessels of mercy whom God prepared for heaven; *Even us*, says the apostle, *whom he hath called*, not of the Jews only, but also of the *Gentiles*. These vessels, in succeeding verses, are called, *God's people, his beloved*, and his *children*. They were sinners of the Gentiles, whom God in sovereign mercy had sanctified; while most of the Jews and many of the Gentiles continued in the service of sin. The Son of God has the Father's promise, that, *in the day of his power, his people shall be willing, in the beauties of holiness*. This promise is fulfilling in all revivals of religion; in which sovereign grace overcomes the obstinacy of sinners, and disposes them to serve God in holy love.

When we look at facts, recorded in sacred history, we are still further confirmed in the idea of God's sovereignty in the conversion of sinners. Among all the kings of Judah, no one was more hostile to the prophets and worship of God, or more engaged in putting down religion, than Manasseh. He had filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, established idolatry in his kingdom, set up an image in God's house, and seduced the people to do worse than the heathen. When divinely admonished, he would receive no instruction, neither would he take warning. Considering the pious example of his father, and his peculiar advantages for religious instruction, together with his cruelty, idolatry, and sin, we should think him one of the most improbable candidates for heaven, among all the crowned heads in that land; not Jereboam, nor even Ahab, excepted. Yet, while many, less vile than Manasseh, were left to persevere in sin and perish in the way of their choice, *he* was humbled into a spirit of repentance, and enlisted in the service of that God, whose altars he had demolished, whose prophets he had slain, and whose name he had cast out as evil. This notoriously wicked man was thus made a vessel of mercy, prepared for the glories of heaven.

The malefactors, who had the honour of suffering with our Lord, afford another striking illustration of our subject. They were both probably born and educated under the light of divine truth, and lived in the same general course of sin. Being detected in crime, they were condemned to die. While upon the cross, they both reviled the Saviour. Before they expired, however, one of them in a spirit of penitence acknowledged the justice of his sentence, reproved his companion, testified to the innocence of our Lord, plead with him for mercy, and left the world with the assurance of salvation; while the other died as he had lived. To what shall we ascribe this difference, but to the sovereign grace of God?

I would mention but one other instance recorded in scripture, and that is Saul of Tarsus. He was learnedly educated at the feet of Gamaliel, a master in Israel. No man could be more shielded in self-righteousness, or more confident of his personal goodness and safety—and no one more bitter against the Christian cause. His zeal against the way of salvation by grace through a crucified Saviour, was, perhaps, never surpassed. He gloried in his privileges, his heartless morality, and his imagined perfection, and even in his opposition to the cross. Such a man must be a very improbable candidate for conversion to Christianity. No evidence could convince him of his error—no human influence control his feelings—no persuasion win him to Christ. Against conviction by argument, or persua-

sion by entreaty, he was effectually guarded by the strength of his prejudices, the blindness of his mind, and the confidence of his hope. Still, in the space of one week, from breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the church, he became a warm advocate of the faith and cause of Christ. Thus he lived and died, sealing his testimony by his blood, and rejoicing in hope of glory through rich grace in a bleeding Saviour.

But what convinced this self-righteous pharisee of sin, broke down his bigotry and prejudices, opened his eyes upon his error, humbled his pride, and brought him to sue for mercy at the feet of Jesus; while multitudes, of the same general character, remained enemies of the cross? Not the influence of friends, surely; for they, if possible, would have hindered it—not the fear of enemies; for Christians were indisposed to harm him as a persecutor; and a powerful band he arrayed against him by becoming a Christian—not the lure of gain, nor the prospect of worldly honour; for his conversion, instead of promising honour and profit, would incur poverty and disgrace—not imbecility of mind or want of education; for his intellect was powerful and his education finished. To what then could this change be attributed? Were Paul himself to answer, from that world of light where he no longer sees through a glass darkly, would he not still say, *By the grace of God I am what I am?*

The whole history of the church bears testimony to the truth, that God selects the subjects of his special grace in a sovereign manner. He convinces and converts whom he will. We sometimes see the most irreligious families visited by his Spirit, and the most profane and thoughtless brought to repentance, while others who have passed for civil and correct men, have remained heedless amid the most affecting manifestations of God's power and grace. And why is it thus? We can neither assign nor perceive the reason; but can only say, *Even so Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight.*

But notwithstanding this truth is so evident, there are certain general rules observed by the Great Head of the church, in perpetuating and extending his empire in this world of sinners.

God operates by his Spirit through the instrumentality of his word. His special work is therefore not to be expected where the Gospel is not published. *How can men believe on him of whom they have not heard?*

Sinners are rarely, if ever, converted where the distinguishing doctrines of the gospel are kept out of sight—or where its peculiarities are treated as absurdities. God honours his own truth, and not the inventions of men, in abasing the proud and preparing vessels for glory.

The men of the world usually lie wrapped in the slumbers of spiritual death, till the people of God arise to trim their lamps and pray for the Spirit.

The subjects of divine grace are more generally found among those who have been religiously educated, and set apart by pious parents to be the Lord's. Still there are some such signal exceptions to most of these rules, as show, that *God has mercy on whom he will have mercy.*

But the doctrine, THAT GOD ACTS AS A SOVEREIGN IN SELECTING AND PREPARING FALLEN MEN FOR GLORY, instead of furnishing any just occasion for *complaint*, is matter of joy and praise.

This may appear from several considerations.

1st. *The moral perfection of God*, which is concerned in every part of his government, makes it desirable that he should act as a sovereign.

The glorious attributes of Jehovah render it perfectly safe for him to fill the throne of the universe, without having any one for his counsellor. No wisdom can be imparted to him by those whom he charges with folly; nor light thrown around any subject in his view, by minds comparatively dark. While doing his own pleasure, he does only what perfect wisdom and goodness dictate; and what will appear the more glorious the better it is understood. That he never acts from the impulse of passion without judgment, or from incorrect conceptions of things, or without sufficient reason for acting as he does, is certain from the perfection of his nature. The excellence of his character is carried into every act of his sovereignty.

When God was about to visit Jerusalem for the sins of the people, he told them by his prophet, "*Ye shall know that I have not done without cause all that I have done in it.*" This general idea is correct concerning all God's works. He has good reasons for every act of his government. But his motives are drawn from his own perfect mind. Could we see all things as he sees them, we should discover his wisdom and rectitude in all his ways. And the fact, that he does not always assign the reasons of his conduct, nor enable us to perceive them, furnishes no evidence, but that in doing his own will, he is uniformly directed by wisdom and goodness that can do no wrong. While we have the privilege of looking into God's works to see his glory, we have no right to arraign and condemn them; nor to demand the reasons of his conduct. Still he has so far unfolded his character, and disclosed the general reason of his conduct, as should perfectly satisfy his creatures, and secure entire confidence in his sovereign administration.

When God passed by apostate angels, and provided a Saviour for guilty men—when he chose from among all the nations of the earth, the seed of Abraham for his peculiar people, to whom he sent his word of truth and grace; and many of whom became heirs of salvation—when he subdued the opposing heart of one of the malefactors crucified with Christ, while the other was left in his obstinacy—when he humbled Saul of Tarsus, while his associates in persecuting the church perished in their rebellion—he acted in view of reasons satisfactory to his own perfect mind. And these same reasons will make his sovereignty to appear infinitely glorious in the view of all holy beings, when eternity shall pour its light on such interesting subjects. To say that God does not exercise his sovereign pleasure in preparing for glory vessels of mercy from among our fallen race, because it would seem arbitrary and partial, is arguing from false premises; since he has as good reasons for leaving some wilfully and wickedly to reject the Saviour, as for drawing others by the cords of love.

2nd. In reclaiming some of his apostate creatures, *God bestows upon them an unspeakable blessing.*

What he does in forming them for glory is a substantial good—a real addition to the sum of holy and happy intelligence. This consideration should silence all complaints against the sovereignty of God in turning some of our apostate race from the ways of death. If one portion of the corrupt mass

of mankind be formed for the Master's use in his holy kingdom, is it not matter of rejoicing, even though the rest should remain without form or comeliness. Preparing these vessels for glory is a real blessing, both to themselves and Christ's holy kingdom. Intelligent creatures, then, in all worlds, instead of making it a subject of complaint, should rejoice in it. Why should the eye of any one be evil because the Lord is good? If in his plenteous mercy, he gives more to some, than they can claim, though it be not given to me, still it is just occasion for praise and thanksgiving to God. And that it is not matter of actual rejoicing with all, is to be ascribed to the want of that *love which seeketh not her own*, and in the midst of suffering rejoices that others are happy. We hear of joy in heaven when one sinner repents, and if the spirit of that world reigned in our bosoms, we should also rejoice, if only one solitary sinner were redeemed. All complaints against God for doing his sovereign pleasure, spring from feelings, that can never harmonize with the songs of angels or with the supremacy of Jehovah.

3d. *God would have been just in leaving all to perish in sin.*

Mercy always supposes the destitution of rightful claim in him who receives it. Since condemned sinners can be saved only through the mercy of God, there could have been no reasonable complaint, had he given up all to indiscriminate ruin. This would have been an act of strict justice. Who of our sinful race would presume to lay claim to the favour of his dishonoured Sovereign, since he has forfeited every thing by rebellion? He is allowed to plead for mercy, but can claim nothing as his just due, but shame and perdition. The whole system of means—all the successive dispensations for man's recovery, are perfectly gratuitous. The great atoning sacrifice for sin, the revelation of divine truth, the sanctifying operations of the Holy Spirit, the remission of sin, and the gift of eternal life, all flow from the unmerited favour of the Most High. If then all *mankind* might have been justly left without mercy and without hope, the Lord may, surely, have mercy on whom he will have mercy, without giving any reasonable occasion for complaint. If he could have been gloriously righteous in showing favour to *none*, surely he is not less so, in granting saving grace only to *some*.

4th. When God in his sovereign pleasure effectually calls some of his sinning creatures, *he does no wrong to others*.

He leaves them with the feelings they cherish, in the course they have chosen, and in the state they desire. They wish not for the God the Christian serves, nor for the employments in which he delights. They are disposed to think his faith irrational, his devotion unpleasant, his self-denial folly, his humility degrading, and his hopes visionary. The things of the Spirit of God are *foolishness* to the natural man.

It is not to be forgotten, that all who hear the gospel have life set before them; no less those that perish, than those who are saved. But they choose the evil and refuse the good. By the terrors of the Lord, by the love of Christ, and by the value of their souls, they are entreated to repent; but still they obstinately refuse. They are joined to idols and God lets them alone: —they are wedded to their sins and he gives them up to their hardness and *impenitence of* heart. They perish because they *will* cleave to their sins

and *refuse* offered mercy. Who can pretend that God does them wrong, in suffering them to make their own choice, however unwise and fatal?

It is also to be remembered, that gospel sinners make this choice in view of consequences. They are faithfully counselled and warned. Their way to death is often intercepted by the stern rebukes of conscience, by the kind admonitions of friends, and by the alarms of providence, as well as by the threatenings of Sinai. Still, keeping their backs turned upon Christ and heaven, they rush through all restraints, and obstinately seal their condemnation.

Finally; The exercise of divine sovereignty in the sanctification of the saved, *hinders no others from entering the kingdom and sharing with them in the blessedness of heaven.* The fact that some are reclaimed and prepared for glory, is not the reason why others perish in unbelief; it makes impenitent sinners no worse, unless they complain, oppose, and blaspheme; neither does it throw any obstacle whatever in the way of their salvation. The path of life is never so thronged as to obstruct the Christian pilgrim; nor the kingdom of heaven so filled, but that there is still room. The salvation of all the ransomed has not diminished the ability, nor exhausted the fulness of Christ as a Saviour, nor drained the treasures of God's pardoning grace. Neither has the conversion of some excited them to oppose that of the ungodly; but rather prompted them to labour and pray for the repentance of their former companions in sin. The conversion of some around them by divine grace, instead of throwing any impediment in the way of their reconciliation, should awaken their fears and excite them also to flee from the wrath to come; since, however vile, they may perceive their own salvation to be possible, unless they obstinately refuse subjection to Christ. The repentance of others, under the influence of the Spirit, adds nothing to their danger, robs them of no advantage, and is no encroachment upon their rights. They may still have a seat in the sanctuary, have access to the divine oracle, ask for mercy, and come to Christ for redemption.

If these things be so; where shall we find occasion for complaint against the sovereignty of God in the salvation of sinners? or why shall we not be cordially reconciled to the thought that he does his pleasure among the inhabitants of earth?

Our subject suggests the following reflections:

1. *The sovereignty of God in saving sinners is a very different thing from what many suppose it to be.* It has been represented, as God's making men happy or miserable without any regard to character; and even punishing them because he had power to do it, and without any respect to the laws of righteousness, or any reasons for doing as he does. But we have seen that God is far from saving some and condemning others through caprice and partiality. He never acts without satisfactory reasons, while in the most perfect exercise of his sovereign pleasure—reasons, though often beyond our sight, yet perceived by infinite wisdom and approved by perfect goodness. Whatever is necessary to display the excellence of the divine character, to vindicate the rights of the Godhead, and secure the blessedness of his holy kingdom, respecting the salvation of men, God will see accomplished in the actings of his wise sovereignty. These objects are steadily regarded in leaving some to fill up the measure of their iniquities, and in reclaiming

others, once equally rebellious. Whatever God may do in forming vessels for glory among our guilty race, where he has a right to dispense his blessings, and bestow his saving grace as he pleases; he will regard nothing but character in the decisions of the great day. Those who have not washed their garments and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, will have no share in pardoning grace, or in the joys of heaven.

2. *Christians owe all their scriptural hopes of heaven to the sovereign mercy of God.* That you, my brethren, are restored to the divine image, is not to be ascribed to any natural goodness or personal worth, that gave you a claim upon God, or that placed you within the scope of the gracious promise. In view of gospel grace, and your own pollution, and the miseries of sin, you renounce all such pretensions. Nor will you ascribe it to your parentage, or any worldly distinctions, since God is no respecter of persons. With the humble Apostle, you will impute it to the sovereign grace of God; and, in view of a depraved heart, and an unprofitable and erring life, you will be ready to say, with admiration and gratitude, "Lord, why was I a guest?" That you have been effectually called, you will ascribe to the same free grace that provided a Saviour, and feel no less obligation to God for his Holy Spirit, in turning you from sin, than for his Son as an atoning sacrifice. A sense of this obligation you will cherish; and, while humbled at the footstool, and accounting yourselves less than nothing, with grateful hearts you will ascribe the glory to God, that you can hope for heaven, and while in the body have an earnest of the glorious inheritance.

3. *Opposition to the doctrine we have considered, though common, is wholly groundless.* The Apostle supposed that wicked men *would* complain. "Thou wilt say, then, why doth he yet find fault, for who hath resisted his will? Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" When Christ preached this doctrine at Nazareth, the people *were filled with wrath.* The carnal mind, full of selfishness and pride, is opposed to the truth which pours contempt upon all worldly distinctions, and abases rebellious worms. But who, in his right mind, can object to the sovereignty of God, since it is wise, holy, and good, such as humble souls rejoice in? The misery of sinners does not consist in their being in the hand of their Creator; but in their rebelling against his government. It is thy sin and shame, O man, to reply against God; it would be thy wisdom and glory to bow at his feet, and to resign thyself to him, to be moulded into his blessed image! The controversy that aspiring worms maintain against God, is certain in its result. They will lie down in sorrow. None but humble souls will find peace and safety, when God shall judge the world in righteousness.

Let me then, in conclusion, affectionately beseech sinners, as in Christ's stead, *Be ye reconciled to God.* It is, indeed, matter of exultation that God reigns as a Sovereign. For, *the Judge of all the earth doeth right.* The sovereignty of God is that of absolute perfection, and is therefore infinitely desirable. If *He* cannot do his pleasure, with safety to his kingdom, who can? Shall we, with all our sin and blindness, be his counsellors? Shall we presume to teach infinite wisdom, or give a more happy direction to perfect goodness? Rather let us cheerfully submit to the only wise God; *and while* angels rejoice that he fills the throne, let all the earth be glad.

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Go—Teach all Nations.—Matt. xxviii. 19.

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SERMON XXXVI.

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CHRISTIAN DECISION.

DANIEL, III. 18.—*But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.*

NEBUCHADNEZZAR, king of Babylon, was a proud idolater. Not satisfied with his existing gods, he conceived the design of rearing a magnificent image of gold on an open plain. Having finished it according to his design, he resolved to dedicate it with great parade. He despatched messengers to summon together all the chief men of his extended empire. Being assembled, they were required, on penalty of being cast into a burning furnace, to fall down and worship the towering image. Among the multitude assembled were three devout Jews, who occupied stations of high honour and authority in the kingdom. At the given signal, all but these three bowed themselves before the idol god. *They* could conscientiously worship only the Most High. The king, being informed of their disobedience, was filled with wrath, and summoned them to his presence. *Is it true*, said he, *O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up?* With this rebuke, he gave them another opportunity of complying with the impious edict, and thus avoiding the dread punishment he had threatened. They at once gave him to understand, however, that they could neither comply with his demand, nor were anxious about the consequences of refusal. They assured him, that the God whom they served was *able* to deliver them even from the burning fiery furnace: but whether he would thus deliver them or not, they could not serve his gods, nor worship the golden image he had set up. Upon which, the enraged king ordered them to be bound, and to be cast into the furnace, raised to a sevenfold intensity of heat.

But God, whom they thus publicly honoured, interposed. The flaming element was not suffered to hurt them. Their chains fell off: and they walked amidst the furnace in perfect composure and security. Here was unyielding regard for the authority of Jehovah; and here was demonstration of the everlasting truth, that *they who trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever.*

We are led by the passage to contemplate the NATURE and the IMPORTANCE of CHRISTIAN DECISION.

I. ITS NATURE.

Christian decision, in general terms, is an inflexible regard for the will and honour of God. It is a firm adherence to that course of conduct, which God has manifestly shown to be the path of duty. It is opposed to a wavering, timid spirit, and a partial discharge of religious obligations. In illustrating its nature, a few of its characteristics may be distinctly considered.

1. It is always exercised *with special regard to the will of the Most High.*

In this respect, it is distinguished from a *native* decision of character. The latter is an inflexible adherence to the course marked out by one's own mind. That course may be in accordance with the will of God, or it may be in direct opposition to it. The determination of the individual is formed; and it is not easily shaken, whether it be morally right or morally wrong. But the man of *Christian* decision resolves, and acts accordingly, in view of the manifest pleasure of God. His explicit precept, or plain providence, gives *shape* to every determination. That precept or providence is looked upon as the foundation of duty: and hence the course determined upon is right in itself, and worthy to be pursued, *through evil report and through good report.* And thus, true Christian firmness, and indeed *heroism*, may exist even in connexion with a native timidity of character.

Of this nature was the decision of the three Jews in Babylon. They refused to obey the impious mandate of Nebuchadnezzar, not from obstinacy, but because *the law of the Lord was graven upon their hearts.* That law clearly marked out their course of duty in the given case; and they could not do otherwise than pursue it. Whether they possessed native fortitude or native timidity of spirit does not appear; but they had that regard for the character, and government, and worship of the Most High, which inspired them with unconquerable resolution.

2. Christian decision is exercised *in regard to matters of real importance.*

Among mere worldly men, a certain robustness of spirit is often exhibited as decisively in matters of indifference, as in matters of moment. Of two ways, each may be pursued without crime, and without damage to any one: but there is a partiality for *one* course, and that course must be pursued at all hazards. Nothing of importance is depending upon the man's decision; and yet he is immoveably fixed. His firmness under such circumstances is a native *obstinacy* of character; not that exalted temper of mind, which asks for the path of duty, and fearlessly pursues it.

In matters of trivial concern, true evangelical decision may be easy and yielding. It exhibits a due respect for the feelings, wishes, and prepossessions of others. It was a bright characteristic of the apostle Paul; who was yet ready *to become all things to all men, that he might by all means save some.* At the same time, in matters of real moment, evangelical decision displays itself with unshrinking promptitude and perseverance. And such was the case, in which those three men upon the plain of Dura were called to act. An attack was made upon the very foundation of all true religion. The most daring indignity was cast upon Jehovah; and to join the general homage before the idol god, would be to sanction the gross impiety of the king, as well as to disgrace their own religion, and blast for ever their character. It was a case, therefore, imperiously demanding the decision they exhibited. Every thing precious in religious principle, as well as every thing tremendous in religious sanctions, required them to act as they did.

3. True Christian decision is exercised *with but little anxiety about consequences.*

The three Jews before the haughty monarch of Babylon, in adopting the resolution they did, were governed by other considerations than such as too commonly exert a controlling influence. They occupied stations of rank and power. A solicitude about consequences would have whispered, 'these must be sacrificed, unless the impious edict is complied with.' The furnace with its blazing horrors was before them; and the burning wrath of the king they knew to be relentless. So that the prospect immediately before them was, of course, inexpressibly appalling. They knew, indeed, that the God of heaven could sustain and defend them; but he had given them no explicit pledge of protection. Still, in obeying the clear injunctions of conscience and of God, they were willing to risk consequences.

The moment the Christian begins to inquire how a given course of duty will probably affect his reputation, his means of advancement, or his safety; that moment he adopts a principle of action which is wide

from a character of evangelical decision. True Christian decision keeps its eye upon the eternal law of God. It asks, not what will satisfy the claims of earth, but what will meet the claims of Heaven; not what will probably secure a quiet passage through this world of gayety, pride, and corruption; but what will exalt the honour of the Most High, and secure his benediction; not what may seem for the present *safe*, but what is *right*.

4. True Christian decision is *uniform and unqualified*.

It was but a single violation of the principles of their religion which the king demanded of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. To fall down and worship the golden image would be but the act of a moment. It would exceedingly gratify one, whom doubtless it was their pleasure to honour. It might save them from temporal disgrace and ruin. It would continue them in a station of rank, influence, and extended usefulness. True, it would be but a single and a momentary act. But by that single, momentary act, what would they have done? Why, they would have renounced their allegiance to the Most High, cast public insult upon his throne, given countenance to the whole system of guilty idolatry, and prostrated their own character for religious decision. If they could shrink from the claims of their religion in *one* case, why not in a thousand? And what is the difference of *principle* between a deviation from manifest duty in a case of apparently trivial importance, and one of obvious magnitude? The Judge of all the earth has decided, *He that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much.*

The man of real evangelical firmness admits not the *thought* of a compromise with sin or with error. If a corrupt appetite *asks* for a slight indulgence, he promptly chastises it. If he is urged to a course of conduct sanctioned by extended custom, but yet sinful, he has principle enough to stand back. If he is threatened with disgrace, with poverty, or with violence, to induce him to violate his conscience and the claims of his God, and the demand be ever so trivial in itself, but yet actually sinful, he is still immoveable as *the everlasting hills*. He would sooner break asunder every cord of earthly friendship,—sooner encounter the frown of an infuriated *world*, than offend his Judge in heaven.

Christian decision, then, is an inflexible regard for the will and honour of God. It is always exercised *with special reference to the divine authority;* and thus differs from that mere native firmness or obstinacy of character, which some possess. It is exercised in regard to matters of *real importance*, in distinction from matters of *indifference*. It is exercised *with but little anxiety about consequences*. It is *uniform* and *unqualified* in its operations.

Such is the *nature* of Christian decision. We are next to consider,

II. ITS IMPORTANCE.

1. It is important as a matter of *religious consistency.*

The Christian has publicly professed a supreme friendship for Jesus Christ, and a supreme reverence for the unchanging truths and precepts of the Gospel. In thus openly espousing the Christian cause, it is to be presumed that he has counted the cost, and is prepared for self-denial, and even for severe affliction: and, consequently, if he shrink from duty when inclination is thwarted, when appetite or passion pleads, when custom tempts, or even when violence alarms; he turns aside from the course he has solemnly adopted, and contradicts the plain declaration of his own lips. Christian brother, you have sworn allegiance to Jesus of Nazareth: and *what have you to do any more with idols?* What have you to do but to obey your King? regarding every voice that would turn you aside from his will, or detract from his glory, as unworthy of a thought; or rather as a lure to blackest treason! These were the feelings of the three pious Jews before Nebuchadnezzar's image. They had chosen the eternal law as their rule of life, and the eternal God as their Sovereign; and there was a noble consistency between their avowed principles and their conduct. But suppose they had yielded to the royal mandate, and the voice of general custom,—suppose they had shrunk from the appalling furnace,—what could have saved their holy profession from insupportable ignominy, or themselves from the odium of instability, and the inexpressible torture of a violated conscience?

2. Christian decision is important as *a satisfactory evidence of real Christian character.*

In a rigid adherence to the Gospel, consists all the religious decision which is urged in this discourse. And in such a course consists obviously that *evangelical obedience*, which marks the children of God and heirs of glory. This principle carries the individual along in the uniform discharge of duty. And the growing brightness of his character leaves no room to doubt, that he is in union with God, and shall stand on Mount Zion above. The law of the Lord is his statute-book. The honour of God is the object of his steady efforts. And the opening records of the judgment, will display to assembled worlds, the soundness and loftiness of his religious character, and the appropriateness of his final and glorious award. This evidence of religious character was exhibited by the three intrepid Jews in Babylon. Their undeviating adherence to the worship of Jehovah, under such trying circumstances, evinced indeed a piety of no ordinary ardour and brilliancy.

A true Christian, in this imperfect state, may sometimes shrink from an exact discharge of duty. The dereliction, however, cannot be frequent. Much less can it be habitual. Is the Christian professor accustomed to yield to the claims of a corrupt appetite or passion? It is madness and mockery, that he should pretend to the spirit of adoption. Does he hear, without painful emotion, the Saviour's name abused? Jesus of Nazareth is not his Master; nor can he be his Saviour. Is he accustomed to shape his deportment according to the maxims and practices of a perverse world? His allegiance to God's throne is but a *nominal* allegiance. The mandate from that throne is, *Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing*. Is he deterred from his duty by a dread of human displeasure, by a regard to his standing in society, or by any other selfish consideration? It is too manifest that the fear and love of God have never become fixed principles in his degenerate heart. This trial of character is a fair one. And his disposition to shrink from a fearless discharge of duty—to attend to the momentous concern of religion as a matter of convenience or expediency—brands him as a hypocrite. It demonstrates the entire absence of that commanding principle which has sustained patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, and millions in glory of whom the world was not worthy. O, ye Christian worldlings! your unchristian *life* testifies against you. A direct voice from Heaven could not proclaim more decisively the hollowness of your religion, the delusion of your hope, and the tempest of wrath that must shortly overwhelm you. Ye are fig-trees in the vineyard, bearing only leaves: and such are destined, all of them, to be withered by the Saviour's curse. He has no neutrals in his kingdom. *He that is not with me, is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad.*

3. Christian decision is important even *as a matter of safety*.

The path of duty is commonly deserted from considerations of temporary interest. Some secular object is either to be gained, or is in danger of being sacrificed.

Perhaps by such policy a temporary advantage may be gained. A pressing evil may for once be avoided; or a desirable object secured. Yet of even this there is no certainty. Indeed, there is danger, even in this life, in pursuing any other than the course marked out by infinite authority. And there is the utmost safety to every important temporal interest, *in committing thy way unto the Lord.*

The policy of the three Jews in Babylon was of a grander kind. It assumed, as an established point, that the will of the Supreme was to be always regarded, whatever might be the will of others. And acting upon this principle, they had their reward even in this life. *God him-*

self *was their refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.* He suffered not an hair of their head to perish, nor a single honour to fade from their brow as rulers of the king's provinces.

But man is not simply a creature of time. And his policy will always be narrow, unless it embrace considerations drawn from eternity. Let all his plans, then, be formed and prosecuted in prospect of an approaching day of reckoning with his Maker, when *judgment will be laid to the line, and righteousness to the plummet.* Then shall the individual, who has been faithful in a few things, be made ruler over many things. While he who has studiously consulted his convenience and temporal interest—who has been controlled at one time by the law of God, and at another by the will of man—will learn, too late, that he has acted upon a policy not to be admitted in transactions with the Eternal. He has attempted a hard task indeed; that of uniting the service of God and mammon. And the result of his toil can be only *shame and everlasting contempt.*

4. Christian decision is important *as a means of securing the respect and confidence of mankind.*

The Christian, to be respected, must manifestly be governed in all circumstances, by the religion he professes—by the religion of the New Testament. His habitual deportment must illustrate the commanding power of God's word. And who does not reverence the man, that can check his strong inclinations when they run counter to the will of Heaven? that can submit to public odium rather than yield to practices at variance with gospel claims? that can promptly sacrifice his ease, honours, possessions, and even *life*, sooner than step an *inch* on forbidden ground, and thus dishonour his Heavenly King? Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, exchanged a dominion in Babylon next to that of the king himself for bonds and flames, because they could not violate their conscience and offend their God. And in doing it, they exhibited a loftiness of character which even bad men, as well as good men, must admire to the end of time. They came forth from the furnace unhurt, to bring on themselves the augmented respect of their cotemporaries, even of the infuriate king himself; while those who sought their ruin, by accusing them to the king, were overwhelmed with confusion and disgrace.

Due decision is likewise needful to secure *confidence.* The obligations of the Christian are imperious and peculiarly solemn. And if, with all their dread solemnity, they have not power to bind him to the service of his God—if he can be governed still by considerations of convenience, reputation, interest, fear,—it is manifest to all, that he is unworthy of confidence; and he must utterly fail to gain it. His

very *profession* will be in the way of his gaining it. But let him be found in all cases true to his God in heaven, and no man on earth, can withhold from him esteem and confidence. Who in Babylon was more worthy to be trusted, or actually commanded a more unhesitating and extensive confidence, than those whose integrity had been tried so severely, and proved by the king? Are conscience and the word of God invariably your rule of life; and are you properly using the powers which God has given;—the world will not be blind to such moral excellence, nor backward to commit important interests to your management. Which leads me to observe,

5. Christian decision is important *as a qualification for eminent usefulness.*

It secures the confidence, not only of men, but of the high and holy God; and he will deign to intrust you with power, and peculiarly smile on your endeavours to do good. *Them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed,* is the language alike of his word and of his providence. He does not select, for the execution of his grandest plans, the timid, the hesitating, and the wavering. Oh no! His servants must be able to say, *God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, of love, and of a sound mind.* The whole history of his church strikingly confirms this truth. When one was wanted to be the deliverer of his people from Egyptian bondage; to receive and publish from his mouth the eternal law of Sinai; and to write the only authentic history of the creation and first ages of the world; whom did God select? It was MOSES:—a man, meek indeed, but of unbending religious principle;—a man, *who could* show his allegiance to God, by declining a proffered heirship to the proudest, richest, mightiest throne of earth;—who could cheerfully forsake Egypt, *not fearing the wrath of the king.*

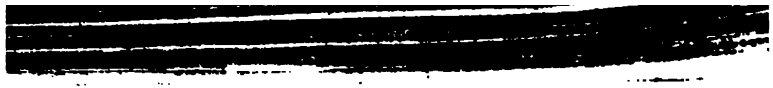
And when God would spread the gospel of his Son far and wide among the Gentiles; whom did he adopt as the *chosen vessel?* It was PAUL:—a man, who, from the moment that light broke in upon his soul, had no other question to ask, than, *Lord what wilt thou have me to do?* Being satisfied of God's will, *he conferred not with flesh and blood.* He relinquished at once his bright prospects of earthly distinction. He proclaimed forthwith to a prejudiced world, and before kings and judges, *Christ and him crucified*—fearless of consequences.

And when again the night of ages had settled down upon the world; when the church had become nearly extinct amid the darkness of Papal delusion; whom did God select as his chief instrument for bringing about the Reformation? It was MARTIN LUTHER:—a man humble before God, yet bold before men;—a man, who, when summoned by imperial

mandate, to meet his enemies at the diet of Worms, did not hesitate; and who, when met on his way, and urged to turn aside by a throng of anxious friends, could say in view of danger, "*That when called by so high authority as that of the Emperor, he must conclude it to be the Divine will that he should go; and that though he should be obliged to encounter at Worms as many devils as there were tiles upon the houses of that city, this would not deter him from his fixed purpose.*" He went: he opened his mouth boldly, and triumphantly: and the whole moral world was made to bend at his will.

And when, in our own land, the churches were in danger of awful debasement, from the admission of the ungodly, and from the prevalence of doctrinal errors; whom did God select to withstand and turn back the desolating flood? It was the immortal EDWARDS:—a man religiously inflexible, alike *through evil report and through good report.* The Almighty loved him, and honoured him as the angel of His strength. The Spirit from heaven again and again sanctioned his ministrations with power and great glory. And some of the efforts of his pen, made under peculiarly trying circumstances, have contributed more perhaps, than all other human writings, to preserve and perpetuate the purity of our churches. Venerable man! his sun went down in full-orbed splendour, only to rise in brighter heavens, and his name will live among the choicest records of truth and piety, till time shall be no longer.

I might here also speak of WHITEFIELD, and WESLEY, and their associates, whom God seemed to have set apart for the special purpose of reviving the spirit of vital godliness in a degenerate age. These men, amid ridicule and obloquy, first within College walls, and afterwards in crowded temples, in market-places, and under the open canopy of heaven, fearlessly worshipped God *in spirit and in truth*, and proclaimed to sober hypocrites as well as profligate sinners, that *without true holiness there was no escape from the damnation of hell.* God signally honoured their faithfulness while they lived; and their influence is still felt, and it will continue to be felt, in the conversion and joy of multitudes which no man can number.

It would not be difficult to name some, of our own day—kindred spirits of those illustrious dead—of whom even infidels and idolaters have been constrained to say, *These men are the servants of the most high God, who show unto us the way of salvation.* But I need not, surely, multiply instances to prove, that God will bless, and render eminently useful, such as are distinguished for Christian decision. His promise is plain and everlasting; *Them that honour me I will honour.*

Indeed there is something in the very nature of this principle of ac-